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SIR ROBERT WALPOLE

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE

A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

1676—1745

By ALEX. CHARLES EWALD, F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF PRINCE CHARLES STUART," "LIFE AND TIMES OF ALGERNON SYDNEY," ETC.

"Amicus dulcis, ut æquum est,
Cum mea compenset vitiis bona, pluribus hisce
(Si modo plura mihi bona sunt) inclinet: amari
Si volet hac lege, in trutina ponetur eadem."
HORACE, *Satires*, Book i. 3.

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PREFACE.

THE materials for a Life of Sir Robert Walpole are to be found and only to be found in the valuable collection of papers brought together by Archdeacon Coxe, and inserted in his well-known work, the "Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole." Among the manuscripts of the descendants of the great Minister of the first two Georges, nothing of importance has been overlooked by the careful and laborious Archdeacon. The future biographer of Sir Robert Walpole is therefore unable to add new matter to the materials already known to exist; he may re-write the life and character of the statesman, but for his facts he must be indebted to the industry and research of Archdeacon Coxe. The mine has been exhausted; to re-fashion its produce is all that can be done.

The period embraced by the political rule of Walpole has long been a favourite with me. In the whole range of English history it would be difficult to find matter more interesting to the political student than is to be obtained during the reigns of our first two Georges. The gradual growth of our parliamentary institutions, the jealousies between Whig and Tory, the intrigues in the Cabinet, the state of foreign politics, the feuds between the King and

the heir-apparent, the tactics of the Opposition, and above all the consummate mastery over the difficulties and hostilities of his time of the man who was the first to create the office of Prime Minister—all tend to give a special interest to the rule of the House of Hanover during the earlier half of the eighteenth century. Added to these topics of note, what literature is more interesting or amusing than the literature which adorned the long interval between the rise and fall of Walpole? Can finer reading be found in the English language than the essays of Addison, the satires of Swift, the rejoinders of Steele, the historical tracts and pamphlets of the day, the essays of Locke and Bolingbroke, Hume and Berkeley, the classical criticisms of the great Bentley, the novels of Richardson and Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, the poetry of Pope and Prior, the comedies of Congreve, Vanbrugh, Steele, and Cibber?

In studying the pages of Coxe, it seems to me—if the remark may be made with all modesty and without disloyalty to the author to whose labours I am entirely indebted for my information—that in his biography of Sir Robert Walpole the Archdeacon has not made the best use of the abundant materials his industry and research have collected. Between the narrative of his Memoir and the valuable Walpole correspondence there are gaps which it appears to me unwise to create. Instead of the letters of Walpole, Townshend, Bolingbroke, and others being woven into the story of the Minister's life, they almost constitute a separate work. The reader has first to peruse the Archdeacon's Biography and then to refer to the Walpole Papers to complete the account of the events recorded. Again, much that Archdeacon Coxe considers

important in the history of Walpole appears to me at this distance of time of little value, whilst various incidents in the career of the great statesman well worthy of mention are, if not altogether omitted, only slightly alluded to. It will also be seen that my views of the character of Walpole, and of the motives which influenced his ambition, differ considerably from those of Archdeacon Coxe.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to write the political life of Sir Robert Walpole as interpreted by his policy and correspondence. All letters of historical interest, or which tend to throw light upon the actions of the Minister or of his opponents, have been incorporated in the body of my narrative. The contents of various historical tracts and contemporary pamphlets have also been studied.

This volume would have been more complete had the death of the late Hon. Frederick Walpole, M.P., not so suddenly occurred. Mr. Walpole took a keen interest in the appearance of a new biography of his ancestor, and his comments and approval encouraged me to continue my task. Unfortunately, when in the middle of my labours, Mr. Walpole died, and I lost not only the co-operation of one specially acquainted with my subject, but also a valuable collection of notes made by Mr. Walpole, on which I had set much store, relating to the later periods of the statesman's career, but which, after the death of Mr. Walpole, could not be discovered among his papers. I have here to thank the late Hon. Henry Walpole and also Sir Henry Drummond Wolff for answers kindly given to various queries.

The printed books to which I am indebted are acknowledged in the text of my volume. Among the works from

which I have not directly quoted, but which have influenced my judgment, are Mr. E. A. Freeman's Essays on the "Growth of the English Constitution," Mr. Alpheus Todd "On Parliamentary Government," and Cooke's "History of Party."

A. C. E.

LONDON, *October*, 1877.

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SIR ROBERT WALPOLE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS. 1676—1702.

THERE are few things more strange in the English system of administration than the power and position of the Prime Minister. Holding an office unknown to the law, the head of a political coterie equally unknown to the law, he rules the country with an authority which is never called in question, and which commands the obedience of all. Yet, strictly speaking, there is legally no such body as the Cabinet, no such post as that of Prime Minister. Both are unknown to the British Constitution, and exist only in virtue of a tacit understanding between the Crown and its advisers. In the eye of the law the Cabinet is an unrecognised committee of the Privy Council, and the Premier an unrecognised chief among his brother Privy Councillors. However familiar to an Englishman's ears are the words *Cabinet* and *Prime Minister*, they are not to be found in any legal or official document. They are unknown to the official phraseology of the *London Gazette* or to the careful wording of a State paper.

And yet, anomalous as is the position of the Cabinet and its chief, it is the natural result of our transition from government by prerogative to government by parliament. Under the Tudors and the Stuarts the ministers were the rulers or the creatures of the Crown according to the weakness or ability of the sovereign. They were responsible to the monarch alone, they did not sit in Parliament, nor were they required to act on any basis of political unanimity. They were ministers, not a ministry.

On the accession of William III. the British Constitution was restored to its first principles, for the theory of our constitution always was that the Crown was limited, and that its powers were checked by the Houses of Parliament. The Revolution of 1688 brought the theory and the practice into harmony. The majesty of the Crown was retained, whilst its powers were distributed through the channel of its advisers. Ministers were obliged to sit in Parliament, in order to explain or defend their policy. Their position was dependent upon the parliamentary support they could secure, and not upon the mere possession of the royal good-will. Gradually the Cabinet, instead of being composed of hostile elements, each independent of the other and bound by no ties of union, settled down into a business-like committee, the members of which were in political accord and responsible in common for the work undertaken. An injudicious minister, therefore, not only brought ruin upon himself but upon his colleagues.

Thus, from the gradual development of political circumstances, a post of great power and influence was brought into existence. The Prime Minister was no longer an independent statesman, often at war with his colleagues,

and bowing before an adverse vote of Parliament merely by his own withdrawal from office, but he became the recognised leader of the Cabinet, responsible for its actions, the channel of communication between it and the sovereign, and dissolved the entire Ministry at his resignation. Under the Stuarts needy sycophants and hungry place-hunters crowded the court of the King, under the Georges they thronged the reception-rooms of the Prime Minister. It was not the sovereign but the premier who could raise a man to the bench, appoint him to an embassy, promote him to a regiment, or offer him a safe and lucrative post in the civil service. Thus, step by step, as the House of Commons became more and more the assembly of the nation and less and less the council of a political coterie, the post of Prime Minister developed in power and authority till it assumed its present semi-royal position.

But the development was slow and gradual. The first who made the office, such as we now understand it to be, was the subject of this biography. It was not until the rise of Sir Robert Walpole that the Prime Minister began to be regarded as the recognised leader of his party, the responsible adviser of the Crown, and the head of the Cabinet. The history of the great "minister of peace" is the history of a man who understood to the full the nature of the change from government by prerogative to government by parliament, who saw that parliamentary government and government by party were synonymous terms, and who had deeply studied the then new political doctrine that power was not dependent upon the royal approval, upon the intrinsic excellence of the measures introduced, upon ability or popularity, but upon the skilful working of

a parliamentary majority. He was the first of English statesmen to recognise the advantages of a united Cabinet, and he gave proof of the light in which he regarded the influence of the House of Commons by being the first of our line of Premiers who resigned office in obedience to an adverse vote of the Lower House. With the career of Sir Robert Walpole begins the history of the faults and the advantages, the patriotism and the selfishness, of government by parliament.

Unlike some of his successors who, unaided by the powerful advantages of birth and connections, have, solely by their brilliant talents and unwearied perseverance, attained to the highest prizes in the gift of the State, Walpole came of a good old stock that could trace its succession in unbroken descent from the days of the Conquest. His ancestors took the name, which he has made illustrious, from the small town of Walpole, in Norfolk, on the borders of Lincolnshire, where they at one time held a manor-house, which was afterwards exchanged for the property of Houghton, in the same county.

For two generations the Walpoles had been actively engaged in politics. Sir Edward, the grandfather of the future statesman, was returned by the borough of Lynn Regis to the Convention Parliament of April, 1660, which voted for the Restoration. A man of brilliant parts, an eloquent speaker, and a stanch adherent of the Stuarts, Sir Edward threw all his weight and influence into the royal cause, and received from the hands of a monarch who seldom rewarded those who had served him best the Order of the Bath. Disgusted with the conduct of James II., his tyranny, obstinacy, and short-sighted bigotry, Robert, the eldest son of Sir Edward Walpole,

declined to walk in the footsteps of his sire, but became a Whig of the most vehement type, and was as active in bringing about the Revolution as his father before him had been in effecting the Restoration. On the accession of William and Mary he sat in Parliament for Castle Rising, and took a prominent part in all the legislative measures which immediately succeeded the expulsion of the Stuarts.

A keen man of business, a sharp landlord, with a natural taste for country pursuits, and an Englishman's love for sport, Robert Walpole spent all the time that was not devoted to his parliamentary duties in improving Houghton. The change from debates on the Bill of Rights and Triennial Parliaments to the consideration of soils and subsoils, irrigation and top-dressing, the manufacture of manure, and the breeding of stock, became at last so agreeable that, though he represented Castle Rising till his death, he gradually merged the legislator into the gentleman-farmer. His farm was the best managed in the county. London dealers came down to Norfolk and offered high prices for his thoroughbred yearlings. Shrewd men from the North competed for his well-conditioned stock. The graziers around, though they knew the Squire was a little hard at a bargain, knew also that he was true and just in all his dealings, and that what he sold could always command its value. A jovial, rough, roystering, hard-drinking man was this Robert Walpole, and as popular with the farmers as he was with the neighbouring gentry. Like his father before him, he was hospitality itself, and Houghton was seldom free from visitors. Open house was kept well-nigh throughout the year, and whether the guests were members of the October Club or supporters

of the Hanover, leaders at Newmarket or pillars of the Church, peers or adventurers, all were welcome and freely entertained. If not a fine old English gentleman, Robert Walpole was certainly a generous and a kindly one.

That farming should be not only a pleasure but a profitable occupation was a matter of some moment to the open-handed Squire of Houghton. At an early age he had married one Mary, only daughter of Sir Jeffery Burwell of Rougham, in Suffolk, and, though the lady had not come to him dowerless, yet, as she made him in the course of years the father of nineteen children, there was need that the tenants should pay good rents and the kine command high prices. Fortunately the property was quite as fruitful as its mistress, and there was no necessity for stint or harsh economy in the old hall at Houghton. In spite of his numerous progeny the Squire could still entertain as freely as ever, could still keep his pack of hounds, and educate and portion off his children in a manner not unbecoming their position and descent.

Of this large family the future statesman was the third son and fifth child. He was born at Houghton on the 26th of August, 1676, and, after a preparatory education at a private school at Massingham, was sent to Eton. Like many men who have afterwards become distinguished, young Robert Walpole did not display in his boyhood any unusual signs of ability. He cared little for books and subjects that can be learnt only from books. He disliked history, foreign languages, and mathematics; but he was precociously fond of an argument, was full of ready humour, and had an insight into character which only required experience to become profound. His good temper, courage, and natural kindliness of disposition

made him popular with his fellows, and he carried up with him to Cambridge, both from tutors and boys, the best wishes for his future success.

The University was but a repetition of Eton. Walpole had been entered at King's College, but he did not apply himself with any great assiduity to the subjects set before him. With the exception of giving him a knowledge of the classics sufficient to enable him to enjoy the works of Horace—the author of the past he, in common with all fond of the study of character and prone to genial satire, most appreciated—books had taught him little. But to discuss the political questions of the day, to analyze with no sparing criticism the motives and manœuvres of Tory policy, to prove in warm and passionate arguments the benefit that arose from the Revolution and the establishment of the Protestant Succession, to seize upon the weak points of an adversary, and subject him to a crushing defeat amid humorous illustrations and witty rejoinders, always to be arguing, disputing, and assailing, and yet with such tact and good temper as never to make an enemy or wound a friend—these he loved and these he excelled in. When his Eton tutor heard that he had been returned by the family borough to the House of Commons, he wrote to a friend, "I am most anxious to hear that Robert Walpole has spoken, for I am convinced he will be a good orator."

Shortly after entering upon residence at Cambridge Walpole was seized with small-pox of the most malignant type. He was attended by Dr. Brady, the famous historical advocate of Toryism, who treated him with the most sedulous attention. "We must take care to save this young man," said the doctor, "or we shall be accused

of having purposely neglected him because he is so violent a Whig!" The illness was sharp, and at one time his life was despaired of. The vigour of his constitution, however, happily proved sufficient to throw off the poison, and he recovered without a blemish. "His singular escape," said Brady, "seems to me a sure indication that he is reserved for important purposes." The doctor's augury did not deceive him.

But Walpole's University career was to come to a sudden termination. His eldest brother, Edward, after a short illness, had died some months ago, leaving the second son, Burwell, heir to the lands of Houghton. The old Squire had told Robert when going up to the University that the estate was already heavily charged with portions for his sisters, and that he would have to be greatly dependent on his own exertions for his future career. The Church offering in those days no mean provision for a younger son who was well connected and not over-scrupulous, Walpole was destined to take Holy Orders, and on quitting the University would have been ordained. But this scheme was frustrated by an unexpected event. Whilst reading in his rooms at King's Walpole received the intelligence that his brother Burwell had suddenly breathed his last, and that, as now no one stood between him and the property, it was desirable for him to quit college and take up his abode at Houghton. In after-life, with the confidence in his own powers that great ability sometimes inspires, Walpole was accustomed to say that, had he not become an eldest son, he would have been installed as Archbishop of Canterbury instead of holding the seals as Prime Minister.

During the next two years Walpole remained at

Houghton. His education was, however, not neglected. His jovial father bade him give up his books and study less, as became an eldest son and heir to a good property. He introduced him to the gentry around, initiated him into the mysteries of what would now-a-days be called high farming, interested him in the improvements on the estate, and encouraged him in sport of every kind. It was not long before the "young Squire," as he was named, acquired a reputation in the county. His parts not being considered inordinately brilliant did not create jealousy, but he was credited with great shrewdness and sound common sense. He could talk well, dearly loved an argument with some old gentlemen whose principles were those of the October Club, was not afraid of the ladies, and when occasion required could sing a good song and tell a better story. Thus he was deemed excellent company.

The old Squire was no austere moralist, and when he heard that his son was not averse to affairs of gallantry he chuckled with satisfaction and congratulated himself that the lad was no milksop. These were the days of hard drinking, days when after the ladies had retired from the table the men were seldom content till they fell under it. The father of the future statesman was not above following this gross fashion, and indulged very freely in the claret and burgundy plentifully stored in the cellars of Houghton. Nor would he sit over the bottle by himself. His son and heir was now his constant companion, and he encouraged him of an evening to imitate the parental example. "Come, Robert," said he, as he passed the decanters, "you must drink two glasses to my one; for, as you are younger and stronger

than I am, you ought to be able to put all the more liquor under your belt, and I am not going to have a son of mine to sit here as sober as a judge whilst his old father is enjoying himself!" This excellent advice was not thrown away, and the teacher had little cause to complain of the inaptitude of the pupil. Had it not been for Robert Walpole's vigorous constitution and his passion for sport, politics might never have claimed him for their own; he drank deeply, yet, we are told, he was able to shake off all effects of the potations of the previous night, and appear the next morning fresh, clear-eyed, and unshaken, as if sobriety had never seen him reject its counsels.

But it was not only before the shrines of Bacchus and of Venus that the late candidate for Holy Orders bent the knee. The young man had all his father's keenness after business. If a tenant was remiss in his rent, he was soon reminded of the fact. If there was an item wrongly inserted in the labour-book, the mistake was quickly detected. On market-days the farmers around knew that there were few better men in estimating the worth of samples or in driving a hard bargain than the young Squire. Not a day passed without his visiting one or more of the outlying farms, inspecting the stock, and seeing that the hinds did not neglect their work or rob their master. Like his father, Robert Walpole had a natural taste for the pursuits and amusements of the country. He rode well to hounds, was an excellent shot, and could impart much valuable information when the conversation turned upon purely agricultural topics.

Delighted that he had a son so exactly after his own heart, the old Squire, who was now beginning to be troubled with a painful disease, placed much of the

actual management of the property in the hands of his son. Young Walpole thus, at an early age, became acquainted with a mass of information which no amount of reading or college lectures could have taught him. His convivial tastes and love of sport made him welcome in the different country-houses around, where he saw life, studied character, and acquired that knowledge of the ways of the world which afterwards stood him in such good stead. His keen, genial, calculating nature was ever watching, fathoming, criticizing; nor had it any lack, in the society with which it came in contact, of subjects for mental dissection. Thus, at an age when most men are diffident, self-conscious, and draw upon their imagination for their experiences, Robert Walpole was calm, confident, and a thorough man of the world. His practical knowledge of agricultural pursuits made him acquainted with the woes and wants of the landed interest, with the crabbed views of the farmer and the crabbed condition of the peasant. His management of Houghton gave him habits of business and a knowledge of men and things which can only be acquired by experience. His was a training not generally undergone by those who embrace parliamentary life as a profession, but he had little cause afterwards to regret the nature of its teaching.

Whilst spending a short season in London Walpole made the acquaintance of a Miss Catherine Shuter, the daughter of Sir John Shuter, the then Lord Mayor. A beauty, an heiress, and gifted with great powers of fascination, the young man saw in the civic damsel a fitting mistress to grace the old hall at Houghton. He followed in her train, pressed his suit, and was accepted. They were married at Knightsbridge Chapel on the 30th of

July, 1700, and went down to Norfolk for their honeymoon.

It was evident to the young couple that the time was not far distant when the property of Houghton would fall into their own hands. The Squire was breaking fast, the malady that had afflicted him was daily becoming more serious; and, in addition to failing health and a painful disease, the old man was accelerating his descent into the tomb of his forefathers by his fondness for the bottle, which he declined to abandon. At last drink, disease, and debility did their work, and on the 28th of November of the same year that had seen his son linked in the ties of matrimony Robert Walpole of Houghton passed to his rest. Of so kind a host, so good a friend, and one so just and honourable according to his light in all his dealings, it is to be wished more could be said than has been said. He was reared in the teaching of the school of his day, and he declined to depart from its instructions. The pupil deserves censure, but surely the master is not wholly blameless.

A man of fair fortune, of good birth, and conscious of his ability, it was not surprising that the new Squire of Houghton, with three boroughs in his gift, should now turn his attention to politics. He was nominated for his father's late constituency, and was duly returned member for Castle Rising. The period in which he made his entrance into Parliament was not uneventful. King William III., the Deliverer, in spite of intrigue and faction, was firmly seated on the English throne. The doctrines of divine right and of passive obedience were spurned with the contempt they deserved, and the principles of parliamentary government reigned

in their stead. Imperious ministers, hostile to each other, and too frequently identifying their own interests with those of the nation, had given place to a Ministry representing the Crown and responsible to Parliament. Yet one great question agitated the public mind. The intrigues of the Papists and the hopes of the Court of St. Germain had been crushed by the clause in the Bill of Rights disqualifying all Roman Catholics, and such as should marry Roman Catholics, from succeeding to the throne. The death of the Duke of Gloucester, however, reanimated the waning hopes of the disaffected. Both at home and abroad the Jacobites were busy with their bribes, their promises, and their plots. The Tories were in favour of the exiled House, and showed themselves not unwilling to be led. The Whigs alone were in stern earnest for the House of Brunswick and the maintenance of the Protestant religion. Still the King had need of all his astuteness. Pitting party against party, gratifying the Tories with office, flattering the Whigs, and humouring the agitators, William cleverly managed to pass the Act of Settlement, which secured the succession in the Hanoverian line and established Protestantism as the religion of the country. The Jacobites were in despair, the Tories were sulky and discontented at their interested passiveness, whilst the Whigs, eager, loyal, and biding their time, watched the current of events full of hope.

Such was the state of affairs when Walpole entered the House of Commons. As was to be expected from his birth and opinions, he took his seat among the Whigs, and warmly espoused their cause. With that shrewd common sense, which was in him what genius is in another man, he had resolved before attempting to take

an active part in debate, to habituate himself to the atmosphere of the chamber, to learn the tricks of oratory, and to watch what to imitate and what to avoid. But a spirit of rivalry, as natural as it was impulsive, tempted him to fly before he had proved the strength of his pinions. Almost at the same time as he had taken his seat for Castle Rising, Henry St. John, afterwards the brilliant Bolingbroke, had been elected for Wootton Bassett. Between Walpole and St. John the seeds of that bitter animosity, which was afterwards to develop into the keenest political hatred, had already been sown in the playing fields at Eton. As boys, a spontaneous aversion, the more intense because unaccountable, had blackened the heart of each towards the other, and when the two now met as men in the arena of the Legislature they were prepared to cross swords. But their relative positions were now reversed. At Eton Walpole was the superior boy, quicker in brain, readier in tongue, and in a higher form. St. John, on the contrary, was a quiet, effeminate, almost dull lad. In the interval between boyhood and manhood the latter had, however, apparently so outstripped his rival as to render any comparison between the two out of the question. St. John was the very type of the haughty patrician: tall, graceful, with handsome features lit up from time to time by the fire in his magnificent eyes or by his bright winning smile. Already had he spoken frequently in the House, and by his well-chosen words gained the ear of his audience and the applause of his party. Already in his oratory there could be distinguished the promise of that classic eloquence which was afterwards to charm his hearers and cause posterity to regret the loss of his speeches as a misfortune

greater than any that literature has had to sustain. He was regarded as a rising man, and it was confidently expected that he would soon hold high office.

With Walpole nature had been less kindly. His appearance—no small matter in an age which set much store upon externals—was against him. He looked like a man who had been taken from the farm. His figure was more remarkable for its breadth of chest and strength of limb than for grace and elegance. His complexion was coarse, rude, and healthy. Save for the intellect that gleamed in his little eyes, and the thought that hung upon his massive brow, his features were heavy, commonplace, and vulgar. He wanted style, refinement, and repose; there was nothing in his manner, appearance, or conversation to bear witness to the fact that he was the representative of a family that had been gentle for centuries. What comparison then could there be between the burly youth who dressed and looked like a yeoman and the elegant dandy who had race stamped in every feature and fashion in every movement?

The member for Castle Rising was, however, determined to enter the lists with his rival. He had sat amongst his party unheeded, almost unknown, whilst the graceful rhetoric of St. John was winning golden opinions from both sides of the House. Walpole had as yet never opened his lips, contenting himself with taking notes, recording his vote, and a diligent attendance at his post. He resolved now that this silence should cease, and his party be made conscious of the suppressed ability working within him. He rose up and delivered his prepared oration. What was the subject of his speech or the occasion that drew it forth we know not. It was an utter failure. His style

was stiff, forced, and artificial; his gestures were ungraceful, his arguments laboured, dull, and confused; his wit fell flat. Except the first encouraging applause that greeted his appearance as a new member, he was listened to in silence, and sat down painfully conscious that he had made an unfavourable impression. To argue with the undergraduates in the common room at King's, or to hold forth across the dinner-table before a few of the Norfolk squires, in whom their third bottle of claret was working pleasant confusion, was a very different matter from rising in his place to address the hardest, coldest, most practical audience in Europe. Still, in spite of his wandering arguments, his turgid oratory and graceless gestures, men accustomed to discern talent and to appraise at their full value the triumphs or failures of first attempts, saw of what he was capable. Another young member had risen that night to make his maiden speech, and had sat down much applauded. A comparison was instituted between the two young men, and Walpole was judged somewhat harshly. "You may applaud the one," said Arthur Mainwaring, a member of some note, "and ridicule the other, as much as you please, but depend upon it that the spruce gentleman who made the set speech will never improve, and that Walpole in time will become an excellent speaker." That prophecy was soon to be fulfilled.

Mortified by his failure, Walpole now for a time contented himself with studying the business of the House, and making himself familiar with its ways and modes of practice. He served upon various committees, and gradually began to acquire confidence in himself from the examination of the different witnesses. He took a deep

interest in the affairs of his county, and was particularly active in matters relating to the trade of Norwich. All questions touching the commerce and revenue of England and the maintenance of the Protestant religion he made his special study, and on more than one occasion he was appointed as the teller of his party during a division. He opposed the impeachment of Lord Somers, who was accused of concluding the Treaty of Partition, by which large territories of the Spanish monarchy were to be handed over to France, and took no unimportant part in the defence of that great and wise man.

Before he had been a year in Parliament Walpole had accustomed himself to the atmosphere of the chamber, and was now prepared to do battle for the cause he affected. An opportunity soon offered itself. During the autumn of the year 1701 James II., worn out with disease and disappointment, breathed his last at St. Germain's, and Louis XIV., in direct violation of the Treaty of Ryswick, at once acknowledged the son of the exiled monarch as James III., King of England. Never did sovereign make a falser move. The English, save a few Jacobites whose party feeling was stronger than their nationality, rose up as one man, hot with indignation at having a king nominated by their hated rival across the Channel. It was one of those moments when a people forget their political differences and resolve to act only as a nation and not as a party. Nothing that the Whigs could have conceived did better service to their cause than this step on the part of the Grand Monarque. The Tory remembered no more his dislike to the new line, the Whig remembered no more his dislike to the royal prerogative, both thought only of their insulted honour and their common enemy.

William saw his opportunity, and availed himself of it. His ambassador was ordered to quit France, and in the Parliament which had been recently elected, and in which the Tories were no longer in possession of their formidable majority, the King said he "need not press them to lay seriously to heart, and to consider what further means might be used for securing the succession of the Crown in the Protestant line, and extinguishing the hopes of all pretenders and their open and secret abettors." His reliance was not misplaced. In reply the Commons addressed the Crown not to make peace with France until Louis had offered the fullest reparation for the insult he had passed upon the nation. A bill attainting the pretended Prince of Wales for high treason was brought in and carried with but little opposition through both Houses.

A more critical measure was then announced. An Act of Abjuration was introduced, requiring all subjects to swear allegiance to William by the title of lawful and rightful King, and to his heirs according to the Act of Settlement. The oath was to be taken by all persons holding any public office, and to be exacted from all suspected of disaffection. With regard to the main features of the bill no opposition was encountered, but a hot contest arose as to the interpretation to be put upon the word *abjuration*. Was the oath to be compulsory or free? That was the question, and party tactics were exerted to the utmost in the debate that followed. The Tories, and with them of course the Jacobites, declared to a man that the oath should be voluntary, and ought not to be imposed by force. So keen was the conflict that the clause was only carried by one vote—188 to 187.

The next step was to bind the clergy, always friendly

to the House of Stuart, by the same tie as restrained the laity. It was deemed desirable that all ecclesiastics, heads of colleges, and members of the universities should take the Oath of Abjuration. An amendment was accordingly moved to this effect, and seconded by Walpole, who, during his residence at King's, had noticed how few of the Cambridge authorities had even taken the Oath of Allegiance. This amendment passed without a division. The indignation of his old University was extreme, and the name of Walpole was a subject of much bitter discussion at the tables of certain dons and in the rooms of the non-juring undergraduates.

"No sooner had I inquired," writes his brother Horace, afterwards the able diplomatist, who was then on a visit at St. John's, Cambridge,* "whether I should be expelled for staying so long but I was told that you would be excommunicated; for the Master, tutor, pupils, sophs, bachelors, and all that are Non-jurors of St. John's, or all that are as bad as Non-jurors, are resolved to issue a bull against you for speeching it against them and their little dapper King the other side of the water: some say you moved, but no one seconded you; others that you moved, but the Speaker reprimanded you, with a long speech in commendation of Dr. G——. But I am told that Mr. H——'s account is, that you vehemently inveighed against Dr. G——, that though Master of a college he never took the oaths himself, and tolerated thirty-five Non-jurors Fellows of the college. As soon as I recovered myself from this violent attack, and with a mouthful of sweet air was refreshed from the strong Jacobitical blast, I answered, I was sure my brother would

* "Walpole Papers," Feb. 28, 1701-2. Coxe.

never be ashamed to own out of the House what he had spoke within, especially in supporting this government, and removing all obstacles against it; that there was no need of fathering lies upon him, for I believe he had said truth enough to do the Non-jurors' business; that you seconded the motion for their taking the Oath of Abjuration, and it passed without opposition at all; and lastly assured them this House of Commons was no whetstone for Jacobitical teeth, and therefore they might bark long enough without biting; and by a late* instance their strength proved so weak in this University that all they could say or do would make them no dangerous enemies to any but themselves, and so left them to consider whether they could not swallow an oath for excluding a fictitious Prince, and Popish superstition hereafter, as well as they could lies and scandal against those that are for maintaining the present lawful King and the Protestant religion, and I believe they are not better satisfied with my defence of you than they were before with Mr. H——'s accusation."

King William was painfully breathing his last amid the fogs of Kensington when the bill, which had excited so much controversy, was brought in to him to receive the royal assent. He smiled as its provisions were read to him, and then faintly articulated his approval. It was the last act he was called upon to fulfil. Within a few hours of the Oath of Abjuration becoming law his sufferings were over. It was not without good reason that the Jacobites termed this, the first exercise of the royal prerogative, his "cursed legacy."

* Alluding to the election of Henry Boyle, chosen member for the University in opposition to the Tories and Jacobites.

CHAPTER II.

THE SECRETARY AT WAR. 1702—1710.

During the next few years Walpole, who had now exchanged Castle Rising for the second family borough of Lynn Regis, rapidly rose in the estimation of the House of Commons. It was found that his powers of work were enormous, that his abilities, though not brilliant, were sound and keen, and that in energy and perseverance he was indefatigable. He spoke seldom, but, on the few occasions when he rose in his place, his words were clear and well chosen, and it was seen that he possessed a complete mastery over the details of his subject. No measure that excited his interest was ever too insignificant to command his fullest attention, to weigh carefully its merits and demerits, and then to reproduce the result through the medium of his excellent common sense and breadth of intellectual grasp. It was this sound patience and capacity for analysis that made him so useful upon committees, and in after-life rendered the dry technicalities of official work a matter of little labour to him.

Of what is called genius he showed no signs, nor can his most fervent admirer admit that he ever possessed any in his composition. But he had what many men of genius often lack, and which frequently stood him in better stead than great originality or commanding talents. He was of

the world, and not of the library. Books and what can be learnt from books he held so cheaply that he had more than once, during his tenure of power, to be indebted to those around him for information upon the commonest historical or geographical fact. But he knew the wiles and wants of the human heart even better than Balzac or La Bruyère. He thoroughly understood the social and political condition of his country and the character of his countrymen, for his instincts were essentially English. He was plain and direct in his dealings, with a straightforwardness that at times was almost brutal in its frankness, but when matched against a superior intellect, or desirous of concealing what was expedient not to be divulged, none could more adroitly than he, by some happy turn of humour, defeat a foe or keep a secret. He was a master of all the arts which, though not appealing to a high tone of mind, yet flatter the vanity of men and command their adhesion. His absence of prejudice and his excellent judgment caused him to read the future more clearly than any politician of his time; throughout the whole of his administration that which he had foretold came to pass. With such gifts, the possession of which he early displayed, added to his ancient name and the votes his Norfolk property commanded, it is not surprising that the career of the young member was watched with interest by those of his party on the look-out for rising talent.

From the Journals of the House of Commons during the earlier part of his political life, we gather that the attendance of Walpole was most punctual, that his vote was always recorded where loyalty to the throne, the maintenance of Protestantism, and the suppression of bigotry

were in question, and that he was frequently called upon by his party to be one of the tellers during a division; but it was not till the celebrated Aylesbury election became a bone of contention between the two Houses that he came prominently before the public. It will be remembered that one Matthew Ashby, a freeholder, brought an action against William White and the other constables of Aylesbury for having refused to admit his vote at the last election. We, in these days of the ballot and the ruling of Common Law judges, can form but a faint idea of the open corruption that was practised by those who controlled the proceedings of an election during the first three reigns that succeeded the Revolution. Peers freely used the influence of their position, great landlords brought pressure to bear upon refractory tenants, the sheriffs in the counties and the returning officers in the boroughs were the agents of the party that had bought them, whilst honest yeomen and householders whose votes were supposed to be hostile were either prevented from going to the poll, or their support, when proffered, rejected upon the most frivolous grounds. The House of Commons, which was then the arbiter of all matters relating to its members, whenever it was required to adjudicate upon any question of election partiality or injustice, never entered into the merits of the case, but calmly decided in favour of the candidate who voted with the majority. Such flagrant violation of all the rights of citizenship, though often murmured against by the oppressed elector, had never yet been openly called in question; the abuse was so powerfully protected that submission seemed wiser than resistance.

The opposition of Matthew Ashby therefore created

the keenest excitement. His cause was tried at the assizes and a verdict given in his favour, the Aylesbury constables being cast for heavy damages. The Court of Queen's Bench now interfered, and ordered, since there had been no precedent for such an action, that all the proceedings should be quashed. The result of this judgment was to carry the matter to the House of Lords, where, after a hot discussion, the ruling of the Queen's Bench was set aside and the verdict passed at the assizes confirmed.

The Commons, indignant at this interference with their prerogative, met in a full House, and a warm debate ensued. Sir Simon Harcourt, the Solicitor-General, rose up and moved, "That the sole right of examining and determining all matters relating to the election of members to serve in Parliament, except in such cases as are otherwise provided for by an Act of Parliament, is in the House of Commons, and that neither the qualification of the electors nor the right of the persons elected is elsewhere recognisable and determinable." The motion was supported, opposed, and amended with great eloquence on both sides of the House. Among the Tories Harley, St. John, and Sir Edward Seymour were the chief speakers. The Whigs were represented by Cowper, King, Lord Hartington, and Robert Walpole. The last took a prominent part in the debate. His sound common sense anticipated the objections that were raised, years afterwards on the passing of Grenville's Bill and on the appointment of judges to try election petitions, against the House of Commons being the proper tribunal to settle so interested a question as the election of its members, and he argued with much ability against the views of the

Solicitor-General. Seconded by Lord Hartington, he proposed as an amendment that the clause relating to the qualification of electors should be omitted. A division ensued, when the original motion was carried, Walpole's amendment being negatived by a majority of eighteen only. The Lower House, having thus asserted its privileges, proceeded to punish the offenders. Ashby and his colleagues were sent to Newgate, whilst their counsel were committed to the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. The Peers warmly espoused the cause of the Aylesbury men; a jealous conflict between the two Houses ensued, and, after a noisy session taken up with addresses, conferences, and resolutions upon privilege, Parliament was prorogued. A great constitutional question was thus left unanswered.

The conduct of Walpole on this occasion was highly approved of by the Whigs, who, though defeated by a small majority, felt that their interests had been materially advanced by their support of the Aylesbury men. The leaders of the party accordingly beckoned the young member for Lynn Regis across that political borderland which separates the disregarded from the distinguished and took him by the hand. Lord Halifax, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Somers, and the Earl of Sunderland warmly befriended him, and it now became only a question of time and opportunity for Robert Walpole to obtain office. The shifting condition of politics soon favoured his ambition.

On the accession of Anne the Tories had been filled with the most sanguine hopes. It was known that the new Queen's sympathies were hostile to the Whigs, that she was easily led, and that, by her education, sentiments,

and religious impressions, she was not favourably disposed to the principles of the Revolution. It was expected that the reign of the Tories would be long and supreme. Around the throne were men anxious to uphold the prerogative, zealous for the interest of the Church, and thoroughly English and insular in their policy. Dr. John Sharp, a Tory and a bigot, was promoted to the see of York and became the Queen's chief adviser in all ecclesiastical matters; Lord Rochester was confirmed in his office as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; the Marquis of Normanby was Privy Seal; the Secretaries of State were the Earl of Nottingham and Sir Charles Hedges; Godolphin, the minister whom Charles II. said "was never in the way and never out of the way," was Lord Treasurer; and Marlborough ruled the army as Captain-General of the Forces. Great hopes had been therefore entertained by the Country party from such a Government.

It was expected that the Dutch intimacies forced upon the nation by the late King would be set aside, that in the war with France England would be indebted more to her fleet than to the aid of foreign troops, that the funded debt would be relieved of its burdens, that the Dissenters would return to the position they had occupied under the Stuart kings, and that the agricultural interest would enjoy peculiar advantages. But these expectations were speedily disappointed. It was found that the war with France could only be carried on by maintaining the alliances formed by William in their integrity. The country continued to be still heavily taxed, the Dissenters were annoyed but not injured, and the farmers saw that, in spite of their selfish objections, their condition remained as heretofore. The extreme Tories, finding that they had

only changed a Whig Ministry for a Tory Ministry with Whig measures, held themselves aloof from the Government. The moderate Whigs, seeing that, though a Tory Cabinet was in power, a strictly Whig policy was pursued, had no objection, in return for certain favours granted them, to give their votes to Godolphin. The current of politics thus setting towards a coalition, the Lord High Treasurer made his first overtures to the Whigs. The Duke of Newcastle was declared Lord Privy Seal in the place of the Marquis of Normanby, and, among the minor posts in the Government, Walpole, who stood very high in the opinion of Godolphin, was appointed to a seat in the council, which assisted Prince George of Denmark in his duties as Lord High Admiral.

The position of Walpole was an embarrassing one. No department was more assailed, both in Parliament and out-of-doors, than the Admiralty. Throughout the service the greatest jobbery and corruption prevailed. Officials freely accepted bribes to pass contracts, and received a percentage on all goods that they had successfully recommended. The timber sold to the dockyards was as bad as the victuals supplied to the fleet, whilst the charges for both were exorbitant. Magnificent ships were put in commission and commanded by men whose sole claims to naval service were high birth or the friendship of some powerful personage. Dandy post-captains, who knew far more about the points of a horse, the breeding of a hound, and the fascinations of the card-table, than they did of navigation, lived on board their vessels in every licence and luxury, while their crews had their pay in arrears and were sickening with the scurvy. Merchants who had paid large sums to the Admiralty to have their precious

cargoes safely conducted across the seas complained that their ships were frequently deserted for days together whilst their escort, intent only on prize-money, was giving chase to some Spanish galleon or French merchantman. For much of this grave negligence and corruption Admiral Churchill, the brother of the Duke of Marlborough, who was then supreme at the Navy Board, was held responsible, and his conduct was severely criticized by the Whigs in both Houses of Parliament.

Walpole took a course characteristic of himself. His sense of *esprit de corps* would not permit him to belong to a department that was undergoing censure without doing his best to defend its policy, whilst, at the same time, conscious of the abuses in naval administration, he drew up, for the benefit of Admiral Churchill and the rest of the council, a complete scheme of reform. We are told that, so great was the reliance placed in his judgment, "his advice was followed and his plans accepted." On this occasion some of his friends reproached him for vindicating the Admiralty against the attacks of his party. "I never can be so mean," replied Walpole, "as to sit at a Board when I cannot utter a word in its defence."

On the 25th of October, 1705, the new Parliament met. In spite of all the exertions of the Tories, the elections had been carried in favour of the Whigs, and the latter had now a marked ascendancy in the Lower House. The first business of the session showed the nature of the change. The Speaker was to be elected. Lord Granby nominated Smith, who was the choice of the Whigs, and Walpole seconded the nomination. Bromley was proposed by the Tories, and a warm contest ensued. Yet the selection of the Whigs was never for a moment in danger;

by a majority of forty-three Smith was voted to the chair.

The reversal of the political situation was not lost upon Godolphin. Ever since Walpole had taken his seat at the Admiralty he had enjoyed not only the friendship but the confidence of the Lord Treasurer. The young member for Lynn Regis was not slow to take advantage of this intimacy. He had studied the position of the two great parties, and he saw the course that ought to be adopted. He pointed out to his chief that the moment had now arrived when a complete union should be effected with the Whigs. In the House of Commons the Whigs were in a powerful majority; the Tories were a divided party, and personal animosities were rife among their leaders. In spite of their maintenance of the Grand Alliance, most of the Tories were wearied of the war and anxious for peace. Nor were their friends entirely trusted. The Country party and the High Church party were the great supporters of Tory measures, but the nation at large was inclined to be suspicious. At the bottom of the Country party was the Pretender, at the bottom of the High Church party bigotry and sacerdotal arrogance. On the other hand, the Whigs were in the ascendant, they were not severed by intestine feuds and jealousies, they were sincere in their efforts for the humiliation of the House of Bourbon, they had no sympathy with the exile at St. Germain's, and they were stanch in their maintenance of Protestantism. The force of these suggestions was not thrown away upon Godolphin; but he was a Tory by conviction, he was fearful of the Queen's displeasure, and at heart he was a Jacobite: he would wait, he said, till events showed their hand more plainly.

He had not long to deliberate. The coalition, which before the meeting of the new Parliament had been silently forming, was now to be openly acknowledged. Tories and Whigs sat in the same Cabinet, and, as was to be expected, each party sought to supplant the other. At first the Tories, aided by the subtlety of Harley and the Court influence, were in the ascendant; but the Whigs soon showed themselves conscious of their strength. The Great Seal was given to Cowper by the removal of Sir Nathaniel Wright, and Somers and Halifax were sworn of the council. Still Harley was Secretary of State, and now that the Queen had quarrelled with the Duchess of Marlborough, he was using all the influence of the new favourite, Mrs. Masham, in the closet to reunite the Tory party. The Whigs, conscious of his tactics, and fully aware that he was seeking to undermine the position of the Lord Treasurer and the Captain-General with the Queen, boldly came to the rescue. Sir Charles Hedges, the Secretary of State, was called upon to resign the seals, and Charles, Earl of Sunderland, one of the most vehement of the Whig faction, succeeded him in office.

With the appointment of Sunderland the machinations of Harley came to an end. Everywhere the Whigs were the favourites. The House of Commons, the City, the trading classes, the press, were all saturated with Whiggism. Marlborough was at the height of his glory, and the people, proud of the honour he reflected upon his country, gave their voice cordially to the Ministry of which he was the most prominent member. It was evident to the most stupid Tory that now was not the time to fight for his party. His best weapons were silence and inaction. Harley resigned, and his place was

filled by Henry Boyle, afterwards Lord Carleton. Somers was appointed Lord President of the Council, and Wharton crossed St. George's Channel as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Such was the situation of affairs at the close of the year 1708.

In the victory of his party the friend of Godolphin was not forgotten. The post of Secretary at War became vacant by the resignation of St. John; it was offered by Marlborough to Walpole, and accepted. The Great Duke, in common with most men who had entered into business transactions with Walpole, was highly impressed with the tact and ability which the young member invariably brought to bear upon all matters intrusted to his charge. The duties of Secretary at War were not only arduous, requiring great punctuality and a rigid supervision of details, but they demanded the nicest judgment, as he had often to refuse without giving offence, and assent without compromising his principles. The Secretary at War had to please the Queen, with whom he had personally to conduct the business of the department; he had to please the Duke of Marlborough, to whom he had to write both officially and confidentially; he had, without offending the Queen, to please the Duchess of Marlborough, who interfered on every occasion with the *personnel* of the army, and at the same time to shun the pitfalls carefully prepared by his enemies. That Walpole, without either loss to his honour or self-respect, during his period of office managed to avoid giving umbrage to the conflicting interests that surrounded him, speaks not a little for his judgment and discretion.

His letters at this time to the Duke of Marlborough have been collected by his laborious biographer, Archdeacon Coxe, and, though no very important addition to

the contemporary history of his day, they show how careful he was not to give offence, how keenly he watched the intrigues plotting around him, and how wise was the advice he frequently offered. On the death of Sir Thomas Littleton, Walpole held for a short time the post of Treasurer of the Navy in addition to that of Secretary at War.

But it was not as a mere minister of a department that the member for Lynn Regis achieved distinction. The Lord Treasurer saw that Walpole was fully worthy of the confidence reposed in him. He appreciated the ready tact, the sound knowledge of finance, and the hard practical common sense with which his subordinate was so richly gifted. Not a question came before Godolphin but the opinion of Walpole was asked, and his decision valued above that of his elders. The Lord Treasurer admitted him into his most secret councils, committed to him the task of framing the speeches from the Throne, and so deeply was he impressed with his knowledge of men and the ways of the world that to Walpole, in spite of what in these days we should consider his youth and inexperience, was now intrusted the management of the House of Commons. "Nothing," writes his biographer,* "will place the prudent and conciliating character of the young senator in a stronger light than that Godolphin and Marlborough, who never cordially coalesced with the Whigs, should take into their confidence one who had proved himself, and still continued to prove himself, so ardently attached to that party; at the same time he was so far from forfeiting the favour of the Whigs that he was equally beloved and trusted by their leaders."

* Coxe, vol. i. p. 24.

Towards the close of the year 1709 a plotting Jacobite crossed over from Paris to London to report upon the state of parties in England. He returned to St. Germain's in despair, for the Whig tenure of power showed no signs of dissolution. Nor could his statement be disproved. At the opening of the parliamentary session in the November of 1709 the Whigs appeared to be as strong, as united, and as assured of the country's confidence as they had ever been. The victories of Marlborough had not only succeeded in securing the safety of the sovereign on the throne, but had raised England to a position similar to that now occupied by Germany. The ambitious progress of France had been rudely arrested. In Spain, Germany, and Holland the policy of the House of Bourbon had suffered defeat. The union between England and Scotland, in spite of doubts and fears, was a success. The country was prosperous, the people contented, and the prospects of a permanent peace seemed now more than probable.

But the stillest hour often precedes the storm—the most triumphant moment is often the herald of disaster. Harley was busy with his schemes and intrigues. The Queen, always a Tory at heart, was now all the more so as her crown seemed safe against the plots of even the most daring Jacobite. The Duke of Marlborough had done his work, and his enemies were beginning to think that his aid was no longer needed. The Duchess, once the cherished Mrs. Freeman, was now the despised and outcast friend. Swift, with his bitter pen, was busy lashing the country squires and the High Church clergy into action, complaining of the heavy taxation, the toleration accorded to Dissenters, and the iron terms proposed to France. It required only a spark to create an explosion. The

history of politics is but the history of action and reaction. The Whigs were powerful because the nation had been disgusted with the Tories; the Whigs had only in their turn to disgust the nation for the Tories again to hold office. In politics there is no gratitude. In an evil hour the Lord Treasurer was tempted to commit a grievous mistake, and his party was doomed. It happened in this wise.

Henry Sacheverell, the rector of St. Saviour's, Southwark, a vain and foolish priest, who had attained a not very enviable notoriety by incessant invectives against the Dissenters, had published a sermon on "The Perils of False Brethren," which he had preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, before the Lord Mayor and a large congregation. In this sermon Sacheverell had inveighed, in the style of the coarsest declamation, against the doctrine of resistance, the toleration accorded to Nonconformists, and the dangers with which the Church was beset from her political and religious enemies. At this distance of time it is difficult to account for the sensation that followed the publication of this discourse. It exhibited no learning, no eloquence, no satire; it was simply a dull diatribe against the Government, picked out here and there with vulgar personalities and tawdry rhetoric. But it took the town by storm. Its sale was enormous. The Tories bought it because it held Godolphin up to ridicule. The clergy bought it because the pulpit had lately been advocating the servile creed of passive obedience, and Sacheverell had declared himself as the spokesman of the cause. Grub Street bought it in order to make capital, either political or literary, out of the abuse or the defence of its principles. Throughout the country the one query was, "Have you read the sermon?" The greatest

preachers of the reign of Louis XIV., the greatest preachers of the reign of Charles II., never created a tithe of the excitement which was caused by this sorry composition from a man, one of whose similes had been, "like parallel lines meeting in a common centre."

It would have been the wiser and more dignified course for the Government to have taken no notice of the sermon or the preacher, but Godolphin, who had been lampooned all his life without disturbance to his equanimity, seems to have allowed his practised insensibility to feel most keenly the scurrility cast upon him under the name of Volpone. He determined that the rector of St. Saviour's should be impeached at the bar of the House of Lords in the name of all the Commons of England. In vain Somers and the Whig lords, ably assisted by Walpole, endeavoured to turn their chief from his unworthy resolution. Godolphin, like many cool calm men when goaded out of their natural prudence, completely lost his judgment, and vowed that nothing would satisfy him but the gratification of revenge. There was no alternative for his followers but to obey.

A committee was appointed to draw up articles, and Sacheverell was imprisoned. The trial took place on the 27th of February in Westminster Hall. Four distinct charges were exhibited against the culprit. He was accused of preaching against the Revolution, of disapproving of the law of toleration, of suggesting that the Church of England was in danger from the conduct of her Majesty's ministers, and of declaring that the Government were bent upon the destruction of the Constitution. It fell to the lot of Walpole, who was one of the managers for the House of Commons in the case, to support the

first article of the charge: "That he, the said Henry Sacheverell, in his said sermon preached at St. Paul's, doth suggest and maintain that the necessary means used to bring about the said happy Revolution were odious and unjustifiable, that his late Majesty, in his declaration, disclaimed the least imputation of resistance, and that to impute resistance to the said Revolution is to cast black and odious colours upon his late Majesty and the said Revolution."

With some eloquence and not a little plain-speaking, Walpole ably acquitted himself of his task. He said that nothing could well be more injurious to the peace and quiet of the kingdom or more highly deserving of speedy and exemplary punishment than the odious charges which had been made by the accused against the authors and principles of the late Revolution. It was bad enough when a licentious press, through its mercenary scribblers and disappointed partisans, disseminated its false and malicious reflections upon the upholders of the late dynasty, but it became infinitely worse when, masked by the sanctity of religion, and supported by the power of the priestly office, such libels were allowed to circulate through the land. "My lords," cried Walpole, "when the trumpet is sounded in Zion, when the pulpit takes up the cudgels, when the cause of the enemies of our Government is called the cause of God and of the Church, when this bitter and poisonous pill is gilded over with the specious name of loyalty, and the people are taught, for their souls' and consciences' sake, to swallow these pernicious doctrines, when, instead of sound religion, divinity, and morality, factious and seditious discourses are become the constant entertainments of some congregations, the Commons cannot but think it high time to put a stop to this growing evil, and for the

authority of a Parliament to interpose and exert itself in defence of the Revolution, the present Government, and the Protestant Succession; all which the Commons think so materially concerned in this question that, if the doctrines of Dr. Sacheverell are not criminal in the highest degree, it will follow that the necessary means used to bring about the Revolution were illegal, and, consequently, that the present Establishment and Protestant Succession founded upon that Revolution are void and of none effect."

Warmly approving of the indignation the conduct of Sacheverell had excited among those whose loyalty was true and healthy, Walpole now proceeded to vindicate the doctrine of Resistance. "But surely, my lords," said he, with a smile, "to plead for resistance—that resistance I mean which alone can be concerned in this debate—is to assert and maintain the very being of our present government and constitution, and to assert non-resistance in that boundless and unlimited sense in which Dr. Sacheverell presumes to assert it is to sap and undermine the very foundations of our government, to remove the natural basis and fundamental strength of our constitution, and to leave it underset with imaginary props and buttresses, which do at best but ill support a shaken foundation. And it is a most surprising assurance in the enemies of our government, that whilst they are striking at the root and digging up the foundation upon which our present and future settlement is built, they should hope to pass upon the world as friends to either. But so irreconcilable are the professions and practices of some men, so awkwardly do they speak well of what they do not in their heart approve, that in vindication of his late Majesty (for that

is a part that sometimes they think useful to act) they declare his most glorious enterprise to save a sinking nation utterly illegal; to recommend themselves to the Queen they condemn this Revolution, without which she had never been Queen, and we a most unhappy people; to testify their zeal and affection for the Protestant Succession they invalidate all the laws that have been made for securing this blessing to posterity; and, lastly, to manifest their aversion, and for ever to blast all hopes of the Pretender, they advance and maintain the hereditary right as the only true right to the crown."

Then touching upon the servile, Filmer-like theories which Sacheverell—that "seditious, discontented, hot-headed, ungifted, unedifying preacher, who had no hope of distinguishing himself in the world but by a matchless indiscretion"—had inculcated in his sermon, he cleverly exposed their shallow and unmanly reasoning. Where an English monarch governed according to the law, and maintained that constitution which had made him king in its true integrity, the obedience of every subject to his sovereign rule was not only a duty and a right, but the contrary became one of the most wicked offences in the calendar. The whole aspect of loyalty, however, was changed when the sovereign ignored the laws of his country, trampled under foot the liberties of his people, and practised such grievances as had been redressed by the Bill of Rights. "The doctrine of unlimited, unconditional, passive obedience," continued Walpole, "was first invented to support arbitrary and despotic power, and was never promoted or countenanced by any Government that had not designs, some time or other, of making use of it. What then can be the design of preaching this doctrine

now, unasked, unsought for, in her Majesty's reign, when the law is the only rule and measure of the power of the Crown and of the obedience of the people? If, then, this doctrine can neither be an advantage nor security to her Majesty, who neither wants nor desires it, to what end and purpose must every thinking man conclude it is now set on foot, but to unhinge the present Government by setting aside all that has been done in opposition to that doctrine? And when by these means the way is made clear to another's title, the people are ready instructed to submit to whatever shall be imposed upon them."

After proving that the resistance displayed in bringing about the Revolution was perfectly justifiable and not the sin represented by the preacher, Walpole concluded by stating that Sacheverell was guilty of the charge exhibited against him in the first article, and that he hoped the punishment inflicted upon the malignant libeller would be adequate to the heinousness of his offence.

His hopes were, however, not fulfilled. The end of this miserable episode is well known. Had Sacheverell been a patriot withstanding the grinding tyranny of a despot, or a soldier whose gallantry had retrieved the fallen fortunes of his country, instead of a clerical mountebank waging war at imaginary grievances, he could not have been more the idol of the hour. The Tories were pleased to regard him as a martyr, and extolled the virtues he had never displayed and the learning he never possessed. The clergy rallied round their persecuted brother, and proclaimed all who differed from them as enemies to the Church. The crowd thronged about the coach of the prisoner as he drove to Westminster Hall and eagerly implored his blessing. From every pulpit, in

every coffee-house, on 'Change, in the boudoirs of fine ladies, and in the cock-pit of the vulgar, the one cry was, "The Church and Sacheverell!" The intensity of this enthusiasm could not be lost on the ministers, who now saw how rash had been the resentment of Godolphin. By a majority of seventeen voices Sacheverell was found guilty, but a sentence so light was passed on the offender that it was regarded by the Tories as a victory, and celebrated with bonfires and illuminations. The sentence was that the rector of St. Saviour's should be suspended for three years and his sermon be burnt by the common hangman.

Upon Walpole the results of this trial were not thrown away. A man whose life reflected a genial paganism, who regarded all creeds with the impartiality of indifference, and who looked upon religion as a local accident and as the result of hereditary influences, he now saw how powerful was the hold of the Church of England upon her sons. He might consider her creed as a miserable compromise between Vaticanism and Lutheranism, and sneer at her Prayer Book as a schedule to an Act of Parliament; but a body of men who could be so united in conflict, who were so jealous of their privileges, and who, by their pamphlets and pulpit oratory, could make a whole nation surge with a passionate excitement, were clearly a foe not to be despised, and a foe that it was most advisable to win over as an ally. From the day when Sacheverell passed out of Westminster Hall, convicted yet triumphant, Walpole carefully avoided ever coming into collision with the clergy. Absorbed by one overwhelming ambition, the love of power, and deeming all means justifiable which led to the maintenance of office,

whenever his natural sympathy for toleration clashed with the prejudices, the wishes, or the exclusiveness of the Established religion of the land, he deserted his principles and was on the side of the Church. From Dissent, politically oppressed and socially scorned, he could expect but little; with Anglicanism as his stanch supporter he could outbid the Tories, and add a new strength to the tactics of his party. He became a Churchman, very much as certain men become religious, not through love, but through fear.

Shortly after the conclusion of this trial there appeared a pamphlet entitled "Four Letters to a Friend in North Britain upon the Publishing the Trial of Dr. Sacheverell." The author was Walpole. In these letters the young statesman entered upon a short history of the recent agitation, and did his best to prove that the trial of the divine was a necessary evil, and one that, in the critical state of the times, could not have been avoided. In his first letter he speaks in no measured terms of the conduct of the High Church party—their bitter bigotry, their fondness for persecuting those who differed from themselves in opinion, and their masked treason in advocating the doctrines of passive obedience and hereditary right, so as to pave the way, on the death of Queen Anne, for the accession of the Pretender. In his second letter he attacks Sacheverell himself, ridiculing the contemptible vanity of the man, his love of exciting the applause of the mob, his airs and effeminacies, and condemning in no measured terms his shallow learning, his mischievous political teaching, and the injustice of his attacks upon the Whig Parliament. In his third letter he finds grave fault with the conduct of the High Church party, and with Sacheverell himself,

for the manner in which both behaved on the conclusion of the trial—lighting bonfires and drinking toasts to celebrate the verdict that had been given, cordially receiving the congratulations of the French, and showing plainly by their behaviour that they were Jacobites first and Englishmen afterwards. In the last letter he thus sums up the consequences of the trial: By the support of Sacheverell the High Church party have received the warm approval of Louis and of the French clergy, the peace which the French King was ready to make has been delayed by his ministers in the hope of the dissolution of the Whig Parliament, and the election of a Parliament more favourable to the interests of France, the Dutch have been disgusted, English credit has been shaken, and the funds have fallen. "Our reputation," writes Walpole, "was higher six months ago than in the days of our Edwards, our Henrys, or Queen Elizabeths, and it seemed as if we needed only to stretch out our hand and reach the blessings of peace. But a sudden turn is given to our prosperity, we are throwing away the liberties of our country and of Europe at one stake, and nobody knows for what; and our allies wait only for the news of a dissolution to declare to all the world that they will have no more to do with us, nor ever trust us again."

The author had good grounds for making this mournful comment. The Duc de St. Simon, in his Secret Memoirs of the reign of his master, calls the intrigues which brought about a Tory administration, and thus saved France, *les miracles de Londres*. "If the schemers are fond of a peace," wrote Marlborough to Walpole at the time of this agitation, "they are not very dexterous, for most certainly what is doing in England will be

a great encouragement to France for continuing the war." The prediction of the Great Duke was fulfilled. The Conference which had opened at Gertruydenburg to propose articles of peace was broken off, the concessions of Louis—concessions favourable to the allies—were withdrawn, and the drooping spirits of the House of Bourbon were revived. Still Walpole did not abandon all hope; he believed in the common sense of his countrymen and in the return of a healthier feeling. "The nation," he writes on concluding this correspondence—"the nation will most surely awake from this infatuation, and resume its ancient vigour—our constitution will revive and preserve itself against future attacks, and the men who have honestly served us at home and bravely fought for us abroad have the honour and esteem they deserve." The motto on the outside of the pamphlet is from Tillotson: "This is not a controversy of reason against reason, but of downright impudence against all the sense and reason of mankind."

But the trial of Sacheverell, as the friends of Godolphin had foreseen, sounded the knell of dissolution in the ears of the Whigs. The Queen, aware of the feeling of the country, now openly showed her political colours. Harley was her constant counsellor, and none could doubt the nature of the advice he offered. Mrs. Masham was now all and even more to the Queen than the Duchess of Marlborough had ever been, and the intrigues of the ambitious bedchamber woman were soon apparent. The surest way of wounding the Duchess of Marlborough was by humiliating her husband. It was thought that the opportunity had now arrived, and it was quickly taken advantage of. The colonelcy of a regiment had become vacant by the death

of the Earl of Essex. The Queen, prompted by her new favourite, desired that Mr. Hill, the brother of Mrs. Masham, a comparatively young officer, should receive the appointment. On hearing of this request the Duke of Marlborough waited upon his sovereign in person. He represented the jealousy that the promotion of so young an officer over the heads of many brave men would create; he remonstrated with the Queen on the conduct of Mrs. Masham, and he trusted that her Majesty would not press her request—a request which he could not look upon in any other light than as a grave slight upon himself. In reply the Queen contented herself with coldly saying that "he would do well to consult his friends."

Disgusted with the answer, Marlborough retired to Windsor and was on the point of throwing up his command. But Anne and her counsellors had now become alarmed at the turn of affairs. The obstinacy of the Queen was disapproved of. It was said that the House of Commons was going to inquire into the conduct of Mrs. Masham and move for her removal. The resignation of Marlborough, at the present crisis with France, would be attended with disastrous consequences to the country. Godolphin also threatened to retire from office unless the wishes of his friend were complied with. Unwilling therefore to assume the offensive till the hour was more propitious, the Queen desired Marlborough to dispose of the regiment as he thought proper and to return to town immediately.

But the overthrow of the Whigs was delayed, not removed. It was the policy of Harley to break up the Ministry one by one, filling each vacancy as it occurred with a Tory. To dissolve the Whig Cabinet *en masse* would be to alarm the City and disturb the allies, for as yet both Godolphin

and Marlborough were indispensable to the country. But a process of gradual dissolution—dismissing the unimportant, temporising with the influential, and bribing the half-hearted—would be a change as quiet as it would be effective. His scheme was soon put into operation. The first to fall was the Duke of Kent, who had been Lord Chamberlain, but who was now succeeded by the Duke of Shrewsbury. Minor officials were displaced; then in a few weeks the first great card was played, and Sunderland was called upon to resign and make room for Lord Dartmouth. "I think our affairs here at home," writes Walpole to Marlborough,* "are in a most unaccountable situation. Sunderland 'tis agreed by all is to be removed, and by none endeavoured to be saved. I don't know what this means, but I am sure it must end in the dissolution of the Parliament and in the destruction of the Whigs."

On the overthrow of Sunderland, Walpole warmly begged Godolphin to intercede for his fallen colleague, but the Lord Treasurer replied that Sunderland was obnoxious to the Queen, and that his removal was but the result of personal dislike, and had no political significance. The Secretary at War thought otherwise, and he spoke with his usual clear-headedness. "He saw the game that Harley was playing," he said, "and it could only be defeated by a bold and unanimous course of action. Instead of letting the Tories feel their way step by step, by causing one minister after another to resign—for the fall of Sunderland would be the fate of all in a few months—let every Whig who held office resign at once. Let Marlborough, who was the right hand of the Emperor and the States-General, retire from the command of the army. Let

* "Walpole Papers," June 6, 1710. Coxe.

Godolphin, who had the fullest confidence of the moneyed classes, break his white staff. Let Somers, Devonshire, Boyle, Oxford—let the whole Cabinet—give up their seals simultaneously, and the Queen would be alarmed; the Tories would find they had miscalculated their strength, and the present Parliament, which was the source of all power to the Whigs, would not be dissolved. Above all, there should be no coquetting with the offers of Harley. Let the Whigs be only true to themselves and they could still hold their own against the designs of the Tories." Subsequent events showed the wisdom of this advice, but Godolphin refused to be convinced.

A fresh humiliation was now put upon Marlborough. The Captain-General had laid before the Queen a list of officers, according to the date of their commissions, for promotion to the rank of brigadier and colonel respectively, on account of their bravery in forcing the French lines at the outset of the campaign. In this list the names of Colonel Hill and Mr. Masham were not included. The Queen at once sent for Walpole, and complained at the exclusion of the name of Mr. Masham from the list of recommendations. On Walpole reporting this royal remonstrance to Marlborough, the Duke at once included Mr. Masham among the colonels who were to be promoted, and the Queen professed herself highly gratified at the ready compliance with her wishes; but a graver difficulty was soon raised. Prompted by Mrs. Masham, the Queen desired that three more commissions, including that of Mrs. Masham's brother, Colonel Hill, should be made out. "Yesterday the Queen sent for me," writes Walpole to Marlborough,* "and after some little matters of no conse-

* "Walpole Papers," May 21, 1710. Coxe.

quence told me, upon consideration, she was of opinion that the promotion of general officers stopping where it did, within one of Mrs. Masham's brother, it would be thought by all the world that this was done in particular prejudice to him, ordered me therefore to notify her pleasure to her Secretary of State for three more commissions of brigadiers, viz. Gore, Hill, Honywood, and said she would then sign all the other general officers' commissions, that they might be sent together by this night's post. I begged leave to remind her of the commands she had already given me to write to your Grace, that she did desire Col. Hill might be made a brigadier, but did not insist upon it, if you had any objections to it, and represented what surprise it must be to you after that to have commissions of brigadiers in your own army sent over without waiting your answer. I represented in the strongest terms I was able the mortification such a step must be to your Grace, the unreasonableness of doing any thing disagreeable to you in the army, and the ill-consequence that must attend the lessening of your credit or authority in the army, and said a great deal more than can come within the compass of a letter, or is proper for me to repeat, and did at last, but with the greatest difficulty, prevail with her not to order those three commissions until she heard your Grace's opinion in answer to my letter. She told me at the same time she would sign none of the other commissions till then, and did confess to me that she had stopped them with this view, but afterwards upon a more mature recollection, and after I had said a great deal to her upon the subject, she commanded me strictly not to tell anybody, and in particular not to let you know that she stopped the commissions upon this account, but would have it thought,

as it hitherto had been, that the delay had been accidental. I have told you now in short the substance of a conversation which lasted above half an hour, and beg leave to observe to your Grace, that to me it was very plain that Honywood was now named as a blind, that it might not seem to be a particular regard to Mrs. Masham; but Honywood I am sure will not be insisted upon, if the other is complied with. I am likewise too much afraid, let your answer be what it will, that I shall have positive orders to do it, or that no other commissions will be signed till this is done."

"The account you give me," writes Marlborough in reply,* "of the conversation you have had with the Queen concerning the commissions for the general officers, gives me so melancholy a view that will not only make me incapable of success, but will at last make it impossible for me with honour to serve. I would not be mistaken, and if I am you will be best able to set me right. I do not think that the Queen does this in order to make me quit, but I believe the Duke of Somerset and Harley can have no other intention in making the Queen give me such sensible mortification but in order to make me quit, and to make their court by it to Mrs. Masham." The end of the correspondence resulted in the request of the Queen being granted. Both Godolphin and Walpole advised that under the circumstances "the matter should be made easy," and accordingly Marlborough wrote to Walpole: † "The inclination the Queen shows for the having Mr. Hill a brigadier makes me desire that you will assure her Majesty that I shall not only in this, but in everything that may be in my power, endeavour to

* "Walpole Papers," June 2, 1710. Coxe. † Ibid., June 12, 1710. Coxe.

make her easy, so that as soon as the campaign is ended I shall at my first arrival order it, so that his commission may be signed without prejudice to her service or mortification to her faithful servant."

Encouraged by this success, Harley now proceeded to further action. He divided the Whigs against themselves, tempting some with bribes and promises, and hinting to those he could not bribe that the influence of the Marlborough family had become too great, and should be curbed. Orford was lukewarm because he was expecting the Garter. Wharton and Newcastle were making terms with Mrs. Masham. Halifax had received a diplomatic appointment. As Walpole had foretold, if the Cabinet were not loyal to itself its dissolution was certain. In August Godolphin was commanded to break the white staff, and the Treasury was put in commission, with Harley as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Under-Treasurer. Then the overthrow of the Whigs proceeded with rapidity. Lord Rochester was appointed President of the Council in the room of Lord Somers. The Great Seal, after having first been in commission, was intrusted to Sir Simon Harcourt. The Duke of Buckingham succeeded the Duke of Devonshire as Lord Steward. Henry St. John, Walpole's rival, became Secretary of State in the stead of Mr. Boyle. Throughout the Ministry Whig resignations were filled by Tory appointments. Marlborough alone, at the request of his friends, continued in the command of the army, and the Tories saw that the time had not yet come to deprive him of the post. Parliament was dissolved, and there could be but little doubt from the present reactionary feeling in the country that the elections would be unfavourable to the Whigs.

In the overthrow of his party Walpole of course suffered. He was succeeded in his post by George Granville. No greater proof can be required of the ability and influence with which the late War Secretary was credited than that Harley should have used all his powers of persuasion to gain him over to his side, and he was assured that if he and Lord Chancellor Cowper would but remain in the Government, St. John and Harcourt would only be admitted to inferior posts. But Walpole, with a single-mindedness that neither Newcastle, Somerset, nor Halifax had displayed, declined to listen for a moment to the voice of the charmer. Then, as flattery had failed, threats were employed. Harley said that he had in his possession a certain fraudulent note for the contract of forage indorsed by Walpole, but that if the member for Lynn Regis would only transfer his services to the new Ministry, the document should be destroyed. But Walpole, conscious that his honour was stainless, and that he had nothing to fear, was alike indifferent either to bribe or menace, and giving up the seals retired into the cold shade of Opposition.

CHAPTER III.

OPPOSITION. 1710—1714.

THE voice of the country confirmed the tactics of Harley. On the dissolution of the Parliament the elections in almost every town and county went in favour of the new advisers of the Crown. So feeble was the influence of the Whigs that it was prophesied the Opposition would scarcely constitute a sixth of the new House of Commons. On every hustings the Tories were established as the stanch defenders of the Church, the loyal adherents of the reigning dynasty, and so deeply interested in the condition of the people that taxation would speedily be lightened, bread be made cheap, and the war put an end to.

Yet this sudden change in popular opinion was due to no grave wrong committed by the Whigs, but simply to a stupid sermon of a dull priest and the vulgar revenge of an ambitious woman. The leaders in the Tory Cabinet, though they might impugn the conduct of their predecessors in speeches and pamphlets, well knew that the sweets of office, and not the good of the country, groaning under the iron hand of Whiggism, had alone been the object of the past intrigues. "I am afraid," wrote St. John to Sir William Wyndham, with his usual cynical frankness,* "I am afraid that we came to Court in the same disposition

* "Life of Bolingbroke," by Thomas Macknight, p. 153.

as all parties have done; that the principal spring of our actions was to have the government of the State in our hands; that our principal views were the preservation of this power, great employments to ourselves and great opportunities of rewarding those who had helped to raise us, and of hurting those who stood in opposition to us. It is, however, true that with these considerations of private and party interest there were others intermingled, which had for their object the public good of the nation—at least what we took to be such." That is to say, the Whigs, who had made the name of England feared on the Continent as she has never been feared since, who had checked at every step the House of Bourbon, and whose domestic policy had been eminently beneficial to the country, had been turned out of the seats they had so worthily occupied in order that certain courtiers at St. James's might first benefit themselves, and then, when their ambition, their wants, and their claims had been fully satisfied, give the lees of their energies to the affairs of the nation. Office first and country afterwards is hardly a pleasant phase of patriotism, however much we may be prepared for instances of unscrupulous selfishness inseparable from party government.

But the incoming Tories, aware that they owed power to the servile discourses of Sacheverell and to the scheming of Mrs. Masham, thought it advisable to attack the Godolphin administration, and endeavour to show that solid reasons had existed for the dismissal of the late Ministry. Grave charges were accordingly trumped up. St. John, in a brilliant speech in the House of Commons, moved for a committee of inquiry into the state of the nation. He accused the late Government of having mismanaged the revenue, of having spent large sums on the administration

of the navy without accounting for the expenditure, and in every department of having tampered with the public money. To listen to the plausible Secretary of State it appeared that the successes of the war were entirely owing to the suggestions and supervision of the Tories, whilst all acts of maladministration were to be laid at the door of Godolphin.

Walpole was put up to reply. With singular vigour and happy refutations, he skilfully defended Godolphin from the charges that had been made, proved by the production of papers and receipts that the whole of the past expenditure had been accounted for, and indignantly affirmed that in the sweeping accusations brought against the late Ministry there was not one syllable of truth, but that they were founded purely upon the suppressions and distortions of party animosity. "If," said he, in a voice of warning, "if he is accused, who cannot be charged with any crime, or any just suspicion of a crime, and whom the member who spoke last could neither fear nor hate, take heed lest the Constitution should receive a wound through his sides. It is obvious how much the multitude is under the influence of bribery, it is obvious that the people of England are at this moment animated against each other with a spirit of hatred and rancour. It behoves you in the first place to find a remedy for those distempers which at present are predominant in the civil constitution, and unless you reject this inquiry with becoming indignation, I leave you to conjecture the situation to which this kingdom and government are likely to be exposed."

But Walpole spoke in vain. The committee of inquiry was formed; its members, save two who were notorious Jacobites, were all Tories, and being resolved to find

errors in the late administration, its report, based on suppressed facts, *ex parte* statements, and manipulated auditing, soon appeared. In this veracious Blue Book it was declared that there were numerous arrears from the public taxes, that parliamentary supplies had been grossly misapplied, that extensive embezzlement had been discovered in the different government departments, that the Admiralty was deeply in debt, and "that of the moneys granted by Parliament and issued for the public service to Christmas 1710," above five-and-thirty millions had not been accounted for.

The issue of this official inquiry dealt the *coup de grâce* to the already waning popularity of the Whigs. Never at any time of our history has party spirit ran higher than during the existence of this, the last Parliament but one of Queen Anne. As a rule the keenest political rivalry can exist without interfering with social arrangements. Even during the fever heat of the first Reform Bill the most vehement Whig would hardly, on account of the difference of his political opinions, have declined an invitation to dinner from a friendly Tory, nor would the most bigoted of Tories have felt it incumbent on himself to shun his neighbour because one happened to be a member of the Carlton whilst the other was a member of Brookes's. But in the year 1711 political differences, instead of being confined to the atmosphere of Parliament, were carried into society. The gentlemen of the October Club declined all acquaintance with the gentlemen of the Hanover Club. Men who had long been intimate, but who now sat upon opposite sides of the House, became estranged. Swift and Addison, in spite of the difference of their political opinions, had been excellent friends, but now when they met

contented themselves with coldly saluting each other. At the opera the Tory dames of fashion appropriated one part of the house to themselves, displayed their political views in the fashion of their toilettes, and patched on the opposite side to the Whig ladies. All social hospitalities were rigidly confined to party adherents, and a young Whig or Tory had as much chance of entering the house of a political opponent as a tradesman has at the present day of being received in the coteries of the Faubourg St. Germain. Everywhere, in all its business and in all its amusements, society was divided into two hostile sections, which like parallel lines ran side by side but never met.

In this state of party feeling the appearance of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry was greeted by the Tories with the most frantic signs of approval. Enemies might sneer at Sacheverell and the intrigues of Mrs. Masham, and attribute the change of Government entirely to the fussy activity of those two eminent personages; but was that the true state of the case? A grave inquiry had been moved by the House of Commons into the conduct of the past administration, a committee of inspection had been drawn up, and it was found that the nation, already taxed to the uttermost, had been grossly robbed, its affairs misconducted, and its navy, the great bulwark of its defence, left in a most unsatisfactory condition. Were not Harley and St. John before taking office well aware of this miserable state of things? Undoubtedly they were. It might suit spiteful Whigs to declare that bedchamber scheming and sectarian agitation had been worked to the utmost to overthrow Godolphin and his colleagues, but the true causes which led to the defeat of the late Ministry were due, neither to Dr. Sacheverell nor

to Mrs. Masham, but to her Majesty having been warned, by those who were truest to the interests of the Throne, that her late advisers were unworthy of her confidence, were guilty of the most audacious peculations, and had acted in a manner not only to bring disgrace upon themselves, but ruin upon the country. In the accession to power of the lofty Harley and the austere St. John a pure policy and a disinterested administration would now be found.

But this specious teaching was to meet with a harsh refutation. The earlier part of the eighteenth century is essentially the age of pamphlets. At the present day, what with speeches fully reported, newspapers of every phase of opinion, circulating libraries, and magazine literature, the publication of party *brochures* is gradually falling into desuetude. A speech in Parliament, which can be read throughout the kingdom within a few hours of its delivery, a leading article in a newspaper, or a few pages in a periodical review, answer now the same purpose for which pamphlets were formerly intended. But during the reigns of Queen Anne and of the earlier Georges a member of Parliament spoke to his brother members only, his words, however weighty, were confined to his audience, and their exact reproduction to the world outside was an act which the most daring bookseller would hesitate to commit. The consequence was that matters most vital to the interests of the nation might be brought before Parliament, and yet the public, so far as the deliberations of the Legislature were concerned, be not a whit the wiser. A statesman might be bitterly denounced, a grave measure might be fully discussed, questions of the greatest import to the commercial, the social, and the political condition of the kingdom might be raised,

and still the multitude, not privileged to enter the walls of St. Stephen's, remain in utter ignorance of the proceedings of their representatives. And here it was that the pamphleteer stepped in as the middleman between the Parliament and the public. He might be a practical statesman like Walpole or Pulteney, the literary leader of his party like Swift or Addison, or a political hack hoping by his attacks and vindications to force himself into a seat in the Customs or the Excise. Without encroaching upon the prerogatives of Parliament, he discussed in his few brief pages all matters agitated at Westminster, and, according to his opinions or hopes of reward, abused or applauded the action of the Government. A powerful pamphlet which could be read by all was therefore a far more able ally or dangerous foe than a powerful speech, which could be heard only by a few. The consequence was that both Whigs and Tories kept in their pay and handsomely rewarded* men of acknowledged eminence in literature to advocate their policy. The pen of Addison, of Swift, and of Steele was to the country at large what the speeches of Godolphin, St. John, and Harley were to the House of Commons.

It was therefore scarcely probable that the grave charges made by the Tories upon the policy of the Whigs should long remain unnoticed by the press. Walpole, whose pen was as ready as his tongue, was requested by Godolphin to write a reply. It was known that he was a consummate financier: according to Arthur Mainwaring, he was "the best master of figures of any man of his time." His style of composition, though pretending to no

* Newton was Master of the Mint; Locke, a Commissioner of Appeals; Swift, a Dean; Addison, a Secretary of State; Steele, a Commissioner of Stamps; Tickell, Secretary for Ireland; Stepney, Prior, and Gay were in the diplomatic service; and Congreve, Rowe, Hughes, and Ambrose Phillips held valuable public appointments.

literary elegance, was clear, terse, and argumentative, and his practical business-like qualities were precisely those to qualify him as the vindicator of his party. After a brief delay there appeared two pamphlets, the one entitled "The Debt of the Nation stated and considered," the other "The Thirty-five Millions accounted for."

In these two short publications Walpole exposed in the most convincing manner the suppressions and misstatements of the enemy. He showed that, of the thirty-five millions alleged not to have been accounted for, every shilling, with the exception of four millions, had been fully explained, and that the debt of the navy, which had been estimated at more than five millions, scarcely exceeded half a million. "Mr. Walpole," writes an anonymous admirer,* "published so accurate a scheme of the public debts, especially that of the navy, with another paper stating the management of the revenues, the anticipations, the debts, and the reason and necessity of them, as set the nation in a manner wholly to rights in that affair, and not only took off much from the great boasted merit of the projectors of those days, but entirely undeceived the public as to the reproaches which were so industriously raised upon the former Ministry for maladministration."

This complete vindication of his party rendered Walpole an object not only of fear but of hate to the Tories. On every occasion the ex-Secretary at War had shown himself true to his colours, and an antagonist that it was dangerous to rouse. He had declined to be bribed into office by Harley. He had exposed the conduct of the Tories, and the real bent of their aim during the Sacheverell agitation.

* "Conduct of Robert Walpole, from the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne to the year 1717." A Pamphlet.

He had never ceased to denounce their foreign policy as tampering with Protestantism and the succession to the throne. Whenever any statement had been made hostile to the cause he supported, he challenged its truth and refuted its charges. He had ably defended Godolphin against the accusations of St. John, he had attacked the Committee of Inquiry, and now in his recent pamphlets he had clearly shown that there had been no occasion for such a committee, and that the Tories, in their anxiety to accuse the Opposition, had been guilty of dishonourable misstatements and inaccuracies. As he could neither be bribed nor silenced, it was suggested that his removal from the House of Commons should be attempted.

The Tories debated amongst themselves the best course to adopt. In the earlier stages of our parliamentary history, when ministers were absolute in their respective departments, and not required to lay their proceedings before the House of Commons, the temptation to make private profit out of the public affairs of the State became considerable. An unscrupulous man who held high office could rob the country on all hands. At the Treasury he had supreme control over the purse of the nation. As Secretary of State he could pillage from contracts, receive bribes for the passing of tenders, use his private information for commercial speculations, and by buying cheap and charging the purchase as dear make a heavy profit out of every article that came within his department—from the timber supplied to the dockyards to the clothing supplied to the Services. As a minor official he had similar opportunities for cheating without detection, and swelling his income at the expense of the nation. Thus the charge of peculation luring the first half of the eighteenth century was always

a favourite mode of proceeding to obtain the dismissal of an unpopular minister. The probability was, even if the accused were as just as Aristides and as above reproach as Bayard, that on a searching examination something might be discovered in his administration of official details which could be used and distorted to serve the end required. When men bent upon convicting a rival are themselves the judges of the investigation they have instituted, there is never any very great difficulty in bringing in a verdict of guilty.

Such was the Jedburgh justice now to be dealt out to the member for Lynn Regis. Some of the more respectable Tories objected to the course proposed to be taken; but Bromley, the Speaker of the House of Commons, little to the credit of the high post he held—that post which an eminent living statesman has said requires the purity of the English judge with the courage of the English gentleman for the discharge of its duties—silenced their opposition by asserting the impossibility of carrying any business through the House unless Walpole were removed. The books of the War Department were called for and rigidly scrutinised. To the delight of the Tories it was found on examination that Walpole, whilst Secretary at War, and when engaged in the drawing up of forage contracts for certain regiments in Scotland, had received a couple of notes of hand, one for five hundred guineas, the other for five hundred pounds, the first of which had been taken up, and a receipt given by Walpole, whilst of the other note four hundred pounds had been paid. At the first blush the case appeared strongly against Walpole. In a full House he was accused by the Commissioners of Public Accounts of a grave breach of trust. He met his accusers with

his usual courage, and rose up at once to reply. Of the speech he delivered on this occasion we have no report, but as Walpole, shortly after his expulsion from the House of Commons, published a pamphlet giving a full and careful history of the fraud he was accused of having committed, we have no difficulty in listening to his refutation.* Briefly told, the case was as follows :—

On the march of the English dragoons into Scotland, the Duke of Queensberry and other Scotch peers were requested by the War Department to consider of the best plan for providing forage for the troops in North Britain. After a brief consideration, it was suggested that the course adopted before the Union should be adhered to, and that a contract should be drawn up between the War Department on one side, and a Commissioner of Forage in Scotland, specially to be appointed, on the other. Sir Samuel Maclellan, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, who had frequently been employed before the Union as contractor, was recommended by the Duke of Queensberry as the most fit person to act as the Commissioner of Forage, and the nomination of his Grace was accepted. Accordingly, when Walpole was appointed to the post of Secretary at War, he entered into the usual contract, as his predecessors before him had always done, with Sir Samuel Maclellan, for the supply of forage to the troops in North Britain. The parties to the contract were, on the one side, Walpole, as representing the War Department, Howe, who was Paymaster-General, and a Lieutenant-General Erle; and on the other side, Sir Samuel Maclellan. But, in addition to these contracting parties, there were five private persons

* "The Case of Mr. Walpole, in a Letter from a Tory Member of Parliament to his Friend in the Country." 1712. London.

who had agreed to take shares in the contract, receiving the profits or making up the losses, according to the nature of the speculation. These shareholders were John Montgomery, Sir Alexander Murray, Colonel Douglas, John Campbell, and *a gentleman in London recommended by Walpole.*

Now the charge against the Secretary at War was that he had received two notes of hand, one for five hundred guineas, and the other for five hundred pounds, as a bribe for allowing a contract to be passed at a higher rate than former forage contracts, in order that the profits arising from the transaction might be largely increased. But in his defence Walpole stated that he was not alone in drawing up the contract; he was assisted by Howe and Erle, who thoroughly approved of all its clauses, and that as a matter of fact, instead of the contract being dearer than former contracts, never had there been one more advantageous to the public service. Indeed, so little margin was left for profit that the officers themselves complained that unless a larger amount was allowed for the supply of forage, it was impossible to procure either the quality or quantity required. A fact which, as Walpole said, "left no room to suspect that the contract was made with any view or prospect of a private advantage to me or any other person," and therefore clearly acquitted him of the charge of receiving a bribe to pass a contract at a rate culpably favourable to the contractors.

How then did the notes come into his possession, both of which were made payable to him, and one indorsed by him? The answer of the Secretary at War is plain and satisfactory. We have seen that among the shareholders in the contract *was to be a gentleman recommended by Walpole.*

There can be no question as to this fact. Sir Samuel Maclellan, the Commissioner of Forage, on his death-bed, swore that it had been agreed that a friend of Walpole's was to have a share in the contract. Montgomery, who was afterwards the informer in the case and handsomely rewarded by the Government, together with Colonel Douglas, also swore to the truth of this same statement. Robert Mann, who was the friend recommended by Walpole, declared on oath that, by an agreement between him and Sir Samuel Maclellan, he was to be "a sharer in the undertaking, at equal profit or loss as should happen or arise in performing the contract, together with such other partners as should be taken into the contract." So much for the evidence that a friend of Walpole's was to be a participator. But not many months after the drawing up of the contract Sir Samuel unfortunately died. A meeting was subsequently held to arrange about the profit arising out of the concern. Both Colonel Douglas and Montgomery *being ignorant of the name of Walpole's friend*, for Sir Samuel alone had drawn up the contract, it was agreed that the amount, five hundred guineas, due as the share of the profit to Walpole's friend should be made payable *to Walpole or his order, for the use of his friend.* On receiving the note, Walpole indorsed it as a matter of form, and Mann in his evidence swore that he, Mann, had received the money, and that Walpole had not had the least advantage in the affair. Again, Colonel Douglas in his evidence also declared that the moment the name of Mann was mentioned he remembered it as that of the person spoken of by Sir Samuel Maclellan as the friend recommended by Walpole for a share in the undertaking. Montgomery, however, preferred to believe that the money

was really paid to Walpole, and that Mann but personated the Secretary at War in order to keep the name of the minister in the background.

On this point Walpole thus defends himself: "Besides the positive evidence upon oath," he says, "the concurring circumstances render even the presumption stronger in my favour than to my prejudice. The first contract was made in May 1709, to determine in May 1710, but the first note was not given till June 29th, 1710, above a twelvemonth after the contract was made. Is it then more reasonable to suppose *that this was given as a consideration to induce me to make a contract which was executed a year before, and was then expired;* or that it was a proportion of the profits due to Mr. Mann as a share, for which the other contractors did not account to him until they saw at the year's end the net profit upon the whole, and could thereby determine what his share amounted to?" With regard to the suggestion that the name of Mann was only put forward to screen the minister from having had a pecuniary interest in the contract, Walpole thus proceeds: "Why then," he asks, "did I indorse the first note, and thus give my hand in evidence against myself? Is it not an act that argues far more for my innocence than for my guilt?"

Another point Walpole urged was that the second note for £500, respecting the amount of the profits in the second contract, though made payable to him or his order as the first had been, had not been indorsed by him, and yet Mann had received £400 in hard money as part payment on the note, thus plainly showing that the contractors knew that Mann was a sharer in the contract, and had a right to the money. Walpole concludes his defence by solemnly stating that he had received no pecuniary

interest either directly or indirectly in the contract, that in the framing of the contract her Majesty had been put to less expense than on any former occasion, and that to Mann, and for Mann alone, had the sums specified in the two notes of hand been paid.

His vindication, however, failed to convince the prejudiced majority of his audience. It was resolved that "Robert Walpole, Esquire, a member of the House, in receiving the sum of 500 guineas, and in taking a note for 500 more, on account of his contracts for forage of her Majesty's troops quartered in North Britain, made by him when Secretary of War, pursuant to a power granted to him by the late Lord Treasurer, is guilty of a high breach of trust and notorious corruption, and that the said Robert Walpole, Esquire, be for the said offence committed prisoner to the Tower of London during the pleasure of the House." Still the friends of the ex-Secretary at War had not deserted him in the hour of need. Four times was the House divided. On the first division the amendment to leave out the words "and notorious corruption" was negatived by a majority of fifty-two. On the second division the main question was passed by a majority of fifty-seven. On the third division the majority for committing him to the Tower was only twelve, and on the last division his expulsion from the House was decided by a majority of twenty-two.

The voice of posterity will undoubtedly reverse this verdict. A minister should not only shun evil but the appearance of evil, and it would have been wiser and more discreet had Walpole entered into the forage contract without attempting to benefit a friend. Cæsar's wife should be above suspicion. Still there is not the slightest

ground for supposing that Walpole himself derived pecuniary advantage from the contract. The refutation by an accused man of the charges brought against him may be of little value, and the same may be perhaps said for the testimony of a friend, but when the evidence both of Walpole and of Mann is corroborated by the statements of witnesses who could have no object or gain no advantage by swearing falsely, then we see no reason why full credence should not be placed in their words.

Walpole was accused of having been bribed to pass an extravagant contract; he showed by the ledgers of his department that the contract, on the contrary, was a more economical one than had ever been entered into either before or after the Union. It was said that he himself had received the sums alleged to have been paid to Mann. But Mann swore on oath that the money was given to him as his fifth share in the contract. Sir Samuel Maclellan swore that it had been agreed between him and the War Department that Mann was to have this fifth share. Colonel Douglas swore that a gentleman of London recommended by Mr. Walpole was to have a fifth share, and on the name of Mann being brought up declared that that was the very name of the person mentioned by Sir Samuel as entitled to this fifth share. Montgomery himself was aware of this fifth share, but asserted that Mann was but a dummy, a man of straw, only inserted in the contract to screen the minister. What proof have we that the interests of Mann and of Walpole were identical? None whatever; the evidence taken on oath proves the contrary. And if Walpole had been so careful to keep his name out of the transaction, is it likely, as he urged in his defence, that he would have indorsed the note, and so have given evidence against himself?

The question thus reduces itself to this: Are we to believe Montgomery, who was instigated by the Tories to attack Walpole, and who was afterwards well rewarded by the Government for his dirty task, or are we to disbelieve the evidence of everybody else connected with the case? But even to take the lowest view of the affair, Walpole was a rich man; is it likely that he who had refused to hold office under Harley would consent to be bribed by a few miserable hundreds? The man who resigned the emoluments attached to such posts as the Secretary at War and the Treasurer of the Navy on account of his political principles would hardly allow his virtue to fall before the temptation to make a petty profit out of a Government contract.

We think the pamphleteer who comments upon this charge against the great minister is not very far from the truth. "Thus," he writes, "Mr. Walpole cleared himself effectually, and impartial people understood the case as it really was, viz. the resolution of a party to suppress a person of another party who they found it for their service at that time to get out of their way."* In his "Short History of the Parliament which committed him to the Tower," Walpole himself thus sarcastically alludes to his trial and conviction: "Mr. Walpole," he says, "had been often very troublesome in the House, talked of public accounts which he pretended to understand, and would upon all occasions be defending the late Ministry where he thought them clear and innocent. He must therefore be sent to the Tower and expelled the House, to prevent his giving the Parliament further trouble, and for a charge against

* "Conduct of Robert Walpole from the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne to the year 1717."

him, or anybody else, the Commissioners of Accounts, who have by this time sufficiently convinced the world that they are of no use but to sully the characters of those that are out of power, and to screen the irregularities of those who are in, were ready as soon as the word was given to cook up a complaint sufficient for the present purpose, though falsified by positive evidence upon oath; but in all these censures it has so happened that the persons concerned may reckon them as so many honours done them."

Walpole had good grounds for arriving at this conclusion. His imprisonment, instead of being the disgrace the Tories desired, was only one of those censures which did him honour. His cell in the Tower was daily crowded with visitors; he was regarded as the martyr to the Whig cause. The leaders of the party, Marlborough, Godolphin, Somers, and Sunderland, held him in the highest honour, and often lightened the weary hours of his confinement by their presence. Innumerable pamphlets were published in his defence; ballads were sung in his praise at the corner of every street; and his friends at the coffee-houses thanked the Government for an hostility so marked, and a sense of justice so warped, which could not but redound to the credit of their victim. Like many a more unhappy State prisoner, Walpole had scratched his name on one of the panes in his cell window. Lord Lansdowne, who was with him, noticed the signature and wrote under it:

> "Good unexpected, evil unforeseen,
> Appear by turns, as Fortune shifts the scene;
> Some rais'd aloft come tumbling down amain,
> And fall so hard they bound and rise again."

But of the various ballads that the rhymesters composed in the honour of Walpole the most-often quoted was one by

Eastcourt, an actor at Drury Lane. It is entitled "On the Jewel in the Tower;" and its stanzas show the opinions not only of the fashionable Whigs, but of the vulgar, respecting the honour and incorruptibility of the prisoner. A few of the verses are worth quoting:—*

"This Jewel late adorn'd the Court,
With excellence unknown before;
But now being blown upon in sport,
This Jewel's case is now the Tower.

With thousand methods they did try it,
Whose firmness strengthen'd ev'ry hour!
They were not able all to buy it,
And so they sent it to the Tower.

They would have proved it counterfeit,
That it was right 'twas truly swore;
But oaths, nor words, cou'd nothing get,
And so they sent it to the Tower.

The day shall come to make amends,
This Jewel shall with pride be wore,
And o'er his foes, and with his friends,
Shine glorious bright out of the Tower."

It is said that Lady Walpole was very fond of singing this ballad, and that when she came to the prophecy in the last verse her voice was especially impressive. The spirit which she infused into the lines—

"And o'er his foes, and with his friends,
Shine glorious bright out of the Tower,"

was very effective.

On his release from confinement Walpole, prevented by the decision of the House from taking his seat in the Parliament then sitting, did everything in his power out of doors to increase the strength of the Whigs. Associating himself with Steele he keenly criticized the actions of the Government, and the satires and party tracts that

* The whole poem, twelve verses, is in Coxe's Biography.

flowed from his pen were among the most difficult that the bitter Dean of St. Patrick's had to answer and refute. He warmly assailed the humiliating clauses to be inserted in the Treaty of Utrecht, and showed how far different were the terms offered by the Whigs, when in power, at the conferences at the Hague and at Gertruydenberg. He attacked the conduct of the Tories in declining to be bound by the solemn promises they had entered into with the States-General. He wrote down the commercial treaty that Bolingbroke was negotiating between England and France to the exclusion of the interests of Portugal. He exposed the treachery of the Government in neglecting to provide for the safety of the Catalans, whom England had encouraged to arm in the cause of Charles III. and of the allies, and who were now to be left helpless to the vengeance of their new sovereign. He laid bare the tricky policy of the Jacobites, their intrigues with the Pretender, their un-national offers to France, and the danger they were causing to the establishment of the Protestant Succession. So ably did Walpole support the interests of his party, and so fully were his labours appreciated by the great Whig leaders, that it is said that Godolphin, whilst breathing his last at the house of the Duchess of Marlborough, turned round to her Grace and said, "If you ever forsake that young man, and if souls are permitted to return from the grave to the earth, I will appear to you and reproach you for your conduct."

On the dissolution of Parliament Walpole stood again for Lynn Regis and was at once returned. Throughout the country the elections were being fairly divided between the two great parties of the State, and on every hustings both Whig and Tory received now an equal hearing. It

was one of those times of political agitation when the public mind scarcely knows what to think or what to wish, and eagerly snatches at every opinion in the hopes of settling its unrest. In whatever direction the country looked the prospect was not pleasing. It was known that the days of the Queen were numbered, and that a new dynasty would be established upon the throne. The people had no particular fondness for the House of Hanover, whilst they dared not encourage the pretensions of the House of Stuart. They thus looked forward sulkily to the arrival of the German King, with his foreign habits and foreign favourites, and cursed the alternative that forced them to become the subjects of a man who had seldom been in England, and who was totally ignorant of the language of its inhabitants. The Treaty of Utrecht, owing to the servility with which it played into the hands of France, and to the manner in which it neglected the interests of our old allies the Dutch, was not popular. The late war had left the country impoverished, and the taxation was heavy and general. The Government was divided against itself, for Harley (now the Earl of Oxford) and Bolingbroke were scarcely on speaking terms. The past policy of the Tories was not satisfactory, but it was asked, Would the Whigs have acted more wisely, or their administration of affairs in the future be more acceptable?

Thus each party met with a cold support, for the programme that either could offer was meagre and unpopular. Those who had always voted with the Tories still continued their adherence, not because they approved of Tory tactics, but simply because they saw no reason why their allegiance should be transferred to the Whigs. With the Whigs the same negative reasons were at work. It was now thought by Somers and the leaders of his party that if a pamphlet

were to appear, exposing the duplicity and intrigues of Oxford and Bolingbroke during the late Parliament, that the political apathy of the nation might be aroused, a revulsion of opinion ensue, and the scale be turned once more in favour of the Whigs. Walpole was asked to undertake the task, and in a few days there appeared in the booksellers' shops of Little Britain a tract entitled "A short History of the late Parliament," prefaced by an ironical dedication evidently intended for the Earl of Oxford. Like all party publications, as a calm and impartial survey of the past labours of the Legislature, this pamphlet is of little worth. It is written simply from a party point of view, and is full of bitter comments on the Government, prejudiced conclusions, and opinions as hostile as they are one-sided. In this criticism of the late Parliament Walpole stanchly defends his colleagues from the charges made against them, shows how greatly the nation was indebted to the brilliant campaigns of Marlborough, vindicates himself from the accusations that led to his imprisonment, roundly censures the Ministry for its misconduct of public affairs, and concludes with a just but scathing attack upon those who negotiated the Treaty of Utrecht.* So free and bitter was the tone of the pamphlet

* The Treaty of Utrecht provided that the Crowns of France and Spain should not be united under one head, and, after certain continental arrangements, it was agreed on the part of Great Britain that the French monarch should acknowledge the title of Queen Anne, and the eventual succession of the family of Hanover to the British throne; that the fortifications of Dunkirk should be demolished, and the harbour filled up; that certain places in North America and the West Indies should be ceded or restored by France to Great Britain—namely, the island of St. Christopher, Hudson's Bay and Straits, the town of Placentia in the island of Newfoundland, and the long-disputed province of Nova Scotia; that the island of Minorca and the fortress of Gibraltar should remain in the possession of Great Britain; and that the Assiento, or contract for furnishing the Spanish colonies in South America with negroes, should belong to the subjects of Great Britain for the term of thirty years.

Hallam thus comments upon this treaty: "But whatever judgment we may

that it was deemed advisable not to intrust its pages to an ordinary printer. A private press was therefore fitted up in Walpole's house and the sheets there worked off. The motto on the title-page was, "Venalis populus, venalis curia Patrum." The *brochure* made some little stir, but was soon eclipsed by Steele's "Crisis" and Swift's fierce rejoinder, "The Public Spirit of the Whigs."

Whilst this literary warfare was at its height the new Parliament met and was opened by commission. A trial of strength between the two great political parties soon occurred. In his "Public Spirit of the Whigs" Swift had fiercely attacked all the Scotch peers. The matter was taken up by the Whigs in the House of Lords, and the ministers forced to prosecute the printer of the obnoxious work. In the House of Commons the Tories speedily retaliated. Steele was now member for Stockbridge, and with his usual impetuosity had thrust himself forward as the champion of the Whigs. Both in his "Crisis" and his "Englishman" he had severely attacked the Tories, ex-

be disposed to form as to the political necessity of leaving Spain and America in the possession of Philip, it is impossible to justify the course of that negotiation which ended in the peace of Utrecht. It was at best a dangerous and inauspicious concession, demanding every compensation that could be devised, and which the circumstances of the war entitled us to require. France was still our formidable enemy; the ambition of Louis was still to be dreaded, his intrigues to be suspected. That an English minister should have thrown himself into the arms of this enemy at the first overture of negotiation; that he should have renounced advantages upon which he might have insisted; that he should have restored Lille, and almost attempted to procure the sacrifice of Tournay; that throughout the whole correspondence and in all personal interviews with Torcy he should have shown the triumphant Queen of Great Britain more eager for peace than her vanquished adversary; that the two courts should have been virtually conspiring against those allies without whom we had bound ourselves to enter on no treaty; that we should have withdrawn our troops in the midst of a campaign, and even seized upon the towns of our confederates while we left them exposed to be overcome by a superior force; that we should have first deceived those confederates by the most direct falsehood in denying our clandestine treaty, and then dictate to them its acceptance—are facts so disgraceful to Bolingbroke, and in somewhat a less degree to Oxford, that they can hardly be palliated by establishing the expediency of the treaty itself."

posing their encouragement of the exiled House of Stuart, their trifling with the Protestant Succession, and their disloyal diplomacy with the Court of Versailles. It was now moved that the writings of the member for Stockbridge being seditious, scandalous, and injurious to the Crown and the country, he be expelled the House. Steele rose up in his defence, and in a speech—prepared, it is said, by Walpole—that lasted three hours rebutted the charges brought against him.

A warm debate then followed, Walpole taking up the cudgels on behalf of his friend, and gallantly opposing the motion of the Government. He said that the prosecution of the member for Stockbridge was a direct attack upon the liberties of the subject in general and of the House of Commons in particular, and that he hoped the House would not permit one of its members to be sacrificed to the resentment of the Ministry, for no other reason than that he had, like a good patriot, warned the nation against the dangers with which it was threatened from the Tory encouragement of the Pretender, the Papacy, and the French. He then proceeded to justify the conduct of Steele. "Why," he asked, "why is the member for Stockbridge answerable in Parliament for the things which he wrote in his private capacity? If he is punishable by law why is he not left to the law? By this mode of proceeding Parliament, which used only to be the scourge of evil ministers, is now made by ministers the scourge of the subject. The ministers are sufficiently armed with authority: they possess the great sanction of rewards and punishments, the disposal of the privy purse, the grace of pardoning, and the power of condemning to the pillory for seditious writings—powers consistent with and naturally arising from their exalted station, and which

they cannot too jealously guard from being perverted to answer indirect or criminal purposes. In former reigns the audacity of corruption extended itself only to judges and juries—the attempt so to degrade Parliament was, till the present period, unheard of. The liberty of the press is unrestrained: how then shall a part of the Legislature dare to punish that as a crime which is not declared to be so by any law framed by the whole? And why should that House be made the instrument of such a detestable purpose—that House which had to boast the honourable distinction of being applied to as the source of redress in all cases of oppression? The member for Stockbridge has advanced nothing which bears a direct criminal construction; nothing which can be construed into guilt without the assistance of forced innuendoes; and shall Parliament assume the ungracious part of thus inferring guilt from mere arbitrary construction? If they do, what advantage to Government or the community can be expected to result from such a measure? Are doctrines refuted and truths suppressed by being censured or stigmatized? In the reign of James it was criminal to say that the King was a Papist; but the severity of the law, or the cruelty of its ministers, could not eradicate from the mind of a single individual the confirmed belief of the fact. The member for Stockbridge is only attacked because he is the advocate for the Protestant Succession; the cause which he so ably defends gives the offence; through his sides the Succession is to be wounded; his punishment will be a symptom that the Succession is in danger; and the Ministry are now feeling the pulse of Parliament to see how far they may be able to proceed.

"Does the member for Stockbridge," he asked, "incur

any blame for writing against Popery? In the reign of James, indeed, preaching against Popery was considered as casting a reflection on the Ministry. But it was not so in the reign of King William. From what fatality does it arise that what is written in favour of the Protestant Succession, and was countenanced by the late Ministry, is deemed a libel on the present administration? General invectives in the pulpit against drinking, fornication, or any particular vice have never been esteemed a reflection on particular persons, unless those persons are guilty of the darling sin against which the preacher inveighs. It becomes then a fair inference, from their irritability and resentment against its defender, that the darling sin of the present administration is to obstruct the Protestant Succession." *

The defence of Walpole was, however, unsuccessful. The "Crisis" and the "Englishman" were voted seditious libels, and Steele was expelled the House.

But graver matters were now to occupy public attention. The health of the Queen was failing fast, and the one topic that engrossed the political mind was the question of the Succession. Three parties divided the State: the Jacobites, who were heart and soul in the cause of the Pretender; the Tories, who would gladly welcome back the Pretender, provided he agreed to turn Protestant; and the Whigs, who pledged themselves to stand by the clauses of the Act of Settlement and the principles of the Revolution. It was known that the Queen hated the House of Hanover, and that her objections to the claim of her brother were becoming weaker every day. The whole machinery of intrigue was now put into active operation. The Jacobites were measuring their strength, and hatch-

* See the speech in the "Life of Walpole" by Coxe.

ing their plots, to cry aloud at the proper moment, "God save James the Third." The crafty Bolingbroke was seeking to supplant the Lord Treasurer, and to seize with his own hand the white staff. Between London and St. Germain's letters and messengers were dispatched, imploring the Pretender to forsake the faith of his ancestors, and assuring him that nothing but the Roman Catholic creed stood between him and the English throne. Mrs. Masham was busy in the royal closet playing the game of Bolingbroke, depreciating the influence of Harley, advocating the cause of the Stuart line, and pouring into the ears of Anne welcome abuse of the House of Hanover.

But the danger of the situation and the craft of their enemies were fully realised by the leaders of the Whigs. A price was set upon the Pretender's head, the Electoral Prince, who had been created a peer by the title of Duke of Cambridge, was invited over to take his seat in the House of Lords, and the Queen petitioned to give no heed to the pernicious suggestions of her advisers. For a brief moment it seemed as if Bolingbroke and Mrs. Masham were to carry the day. Harley, who had offended the Queen by his rudeness, his idleness and habits of intoxication, was dismissed from office, and Bolingbroke, though not yet appointed to the vacant post, became supreme at the Council Board. Then came the illness of Anne, the transfer of the white staff to—not Bolingbroke, but Shrewsbury, and the demise of the sovereign. The Whigs, knowing that the law was on their side, and feeling assured that Parliament would support their measures, at once stood at the helm of the Government. It was one of those occasions when the firm and the

resolute win the day. Troops were ordered to London. An embargo was laid upon the ports. The fleet stood out to sea. The Tories were nonplussed; and the heralds proclaimed the new King without disturbance. What a comment upon the vanity of human wishes and the insecurity of ambition is contained in the few lines that Bolingbroke wrote to Swift: "The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday; the Queen died on Sunday. What a world is this! And how does Fortune banter us!"

CHAPTER IV.

MINISTERIAL INTRIGUES. 1714—1717.

THE condition of affairs at the time of the accession of George I. required the greatest tact and judgment in him who was called to the throne to control the animosity of party feuds and the dangers of the political situation. Unfortunately the new King possessed few of the qualities to recommend him to the feelings of the English people. He was a German, and he took scant pains to hide his preference for the country of his birth. His intimate friends were all Germans, he refused to learn English, and whenever he could escape from St. James's he ran over to his beloved Herrenhausen. Among his boon companions he was jovial, free, and hearty, but when he appeared in state before the public, or had to attend to the various social duties imposed upon Royalty, he was stiff, reserved, and ungracious. Except his courage, which was undoubted, he had not a single point in his character to propitiate the nation he had been summoned to govern. His abilities were slender, and his prejudices, which he occasionally mistook for ideas, strong. He was frugal where he ought to have been generous, and lavish where he ought to have been sparing. He rode badly, was a miserable shot, and consequently had little of the English enthusiasm for field sports. His manners were

gross and coarse, and his appearance was not in his favour.

Whatever be our faults and vices, we at least prefer that our sins should be veiled from the public eye, to being exposed in all their hideous nudity. But our first George was utterly indifferent to even the appearance of decorum. He entered London with a cohort of mistresses so fat and ugly that they made his infidelity as ridiculous as it was shameless. And this flagrant misconduct became all the more offensive when it was known how harshly he had judged and treated his own wife for her alleged gallantries. Quiet people who remembered the decent, chaste, and formal court of Queen Anne were shocked to find the stately rooms at Windsor and the long galleries of St. James's thronged with characters which it would be charity to call doubtful. "There is nothing bad in him as a man," says Lord Chesterfield, whose notions of bad men were peculiar, writing about his King, "but he has no respect for women, and he likes those best who have little principles and much fat." Several of the fine ladies of those days, ambitious of the royal regard, did their utmost to increase their size in the hopes of rivalling the charms of the Duchess of Kendal, *née* Schulemberg, or those of the Countess of Darlington, *née* Kielmansegge. "Some succeeded and others burst," sneers Chesterfield, as well he might.

It was an age of excessive insobriety, but King George drank like a boor and cared little who saw him in his cups. It was his delight to booze far into the night, playing low buffooneries with his companions amid the laughter of his women, and doing his utmost to transform his court into the taproom of a tavern. Those who

remembered the graceful dissipation of the Merry Monarch required all their breeding to suppress their scorn when in the presence of their sovereign. In short the new King was a man in whom the material part of human nature clouded and weighted the intellectual. Within the pale of civilisation it would be difficult to find one who more mistook sensuality for love, dissipation for amusement, and obstinacy for opinions, than he who established the House of Hanover upon the throne of England.

The conduct of such a monarch was hardly calculated to silence the disaffection that was seething around him both at home and abroad. The Jacobites were in ecstasies at the open profligacy of the German King, feeling assured that his manners and immorality would soon alienate the people of England from their allegiance to his family. Horace Walpole tells us that "nothing could be grosser than the ribaldry vomited out in lampoons, libels, and every channel of abuse against the sovereign and the new court, and chanted even in their hearing about the public streets." The Tories, disgusted with their exclusion from office, were intriguing again with the Pretender, and urging him, but —to his credit be it said—with no avail, to abandon his religion. Abroad the accession of the House of Hanover had made many enemies. France was opposed to it, and was secretly watching her opportunity. Spain and Italy disapproved of it. The Emperor of Germany viewed it with jealousy. On all sides the new sovereign was encompassed by enemies.

Yet, so difficult is it to predict the result of political complications, no ruler's reign was more peaceable. The King did as he pleased in his private life, and intrusted his political conduct to the hands of his ministers. The

Jacobites were disappointed in their hopes of the return of the Pretender. Louis XIV. found it prudent to decline his support to the cause of the Stuart dynasty; consequently the Pretender circulated his manifestoes in vain, and the insurrection in Scotland turned out a complete failure. It was not long before the foreign powers came to the conclusion that England as an ally under the House of Hanover was preferable to England as a foe rejecting the House of Stuart. They soon therefore gave in their adherence to the new state of things, and the Pretender crossed the Alps, to become the recipient of the bounty of the Vatican.

On the accession of George I. the affairs of the nation were confided to a wholly Whig administration. The Treasury was put into commission with Lord Halifax as its head. Lord Townshend, the brother-in-law of Robert Walpole, and General Stanhope were the Secretaries of State; Lord Cowper was Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Nottingham President of the Council, Lord Sunderland Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, Marlborough Captain-General and Master of the Ordnance. Walpole, however, was excluded from the Cabinet, and had for the moment to content himself with the subordinate post of Paymaster-General. The minor offices were also placed entirely in the hands of Whigs. Well might the mortified Bolingbroke write to Atterbury, "I see plainly that the Tory party is gone."

One of the first acts of the new administration was to dissolve Parliament. The elections—the result of which had been so unaccountably Whig and then Tory, then again Whig and then again Tory—went now strongly in favour of the Whigs, and on the meeting of the Houses on

the 17th of March, 1715, the Tories were once more in a considerable minority. The King opened Parliament in person. His speech was calm and temperate. He thanked those who had supported his succession, mildly disapproved of the peace, and assured the nation that he would uphold the principles of the English Constitution and the doctrines of the Church of England.

The addresses in reply to the royal speech occasioned a warm debate. In the Lords, in spite of the eloquence of Bolingbroke, the motion that was carried amounted to a vote of censure upon the conduct of the late Government. But it was in the House of Commons that the Tory leaders were to learn the fate in store for them. The Address was moved by Walpole. He spoke of the joy of the nation at seeing the House of Hanover settled upon the throne; of the base conduct of the past administration, of the infamous peace that had been signed, of the intrigues with the exiled family, and concluded in the following words: "It is with just resentment we observe that the Pretender still resides in Lorraine, and that he has the presumption by declarations from thence to stir up your Majesty's subjects to rebellion; but that which raises the utmost indignation of your Commons is that it appears therein that his hopes were built upon the measures that had been taken for some time past in Great Britain. *It shall be our business to trace out those measures whereon he placed his hopes, and to bring the authors of them to condign punishment.*"

This threat naturally excited the opposition of the Tories, who had no wish for their disloyal dealings with the Court at St. Germain's to be disclosed, and they retorted that the Whigs by their conduct on the present occasion had cast unjust reflections upon the late Queen. Walpole

cleverly replied that nothing was further from the intention of his party than to asperse their late sovereign, but what they desired, and what they were determined to carry out, was to vindicate her Majesty's memory by exposing and punishing those ministers who had thrown on that good, pious, and well-meaning Princess all the blame and odium of their evil counsels. Then he added "that they must distinguish between censuring ministers and condemning the peace in general, and condemning particular persons; that they might in equity and justice do the first, because the whole nation was already sensible that their honour and true interest had been sacrificed by that late peace; that in due time they would call them to account who made and advised such a peace; but God forbid they should ever condemn any person unheard." Stanhope followed in the same strain. On dividing there was a majority for the Government of 106.

The threat of Walpole was no idle one. On the 31st of March an address was moved and carried in the House of Commons, desiring the King to command that all the correspondence relating to the Peace of Utrecht be laid upon the table. The request was complied with, but the papers were so voluminous that it became necessary to constitute a select committee to inspect and report upon them. A committee, composed chiefly of Whigs, was chosen by ballot, with Walpole as chairman. For well nigh two months it met daily, perusing papers, examining witnesses, and investigating accounts. On the 2nd of June Walpole informed the House that the committee had ended its labours, and begged that a day might be appointed for the reading of the report, as in its pages would be found matters of the gravest importance. A day was accordingly

fixed upon, and at the appointed time a crowded House assembled to listen to the conclusions of their committee. The report was read by Walpole, who, we are told, was its principal author.

"It was divided," writes Archdeacon Coxe, "into two parts. The first stated the clandestine negotiations with Mesnager, the French plenipotentiary, which produced two sets of preliminary articles: the one private and special for Great Britain only, the other general, for all her allies; the deceitful offers of the French plenipotentiaries at Utrecht with the connivance of the Ministry; the negotiation in regard to the Spanish monarchy; the suspension of arms; the seizure of Ghent and Bruges by the Duke of Ormond, and his acting in concert with the French general; the journey of Bolingbroke to France to arrange a separate peace; the negotiations of Shrewsbury and Prior; and the principal conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht, with a view of criminating the ministers for having deserted their allies and betrayed the interests and honour of their country. The second part stated their secret transactions with the Pretender; a letter from Oxford to the Queen containing a brief account of public affairs, from August 6th, 1710, to June 8th, 1714; the desertion of the Catalans, and some other papers of less importance." The result of this report was the impeachment of Bolingbroke, who, owing to the malicious advice of Marlborough, had fled to France, of Oxford and Ormond for high treason, and of Strafford for high crimes and misdemeanours.

It has been said that the conduct of the Whigs on this occasion was actuated by party malevolence and is little to their credit. I fail to see the truth of the charge. Any one who wades through the array of accusations contained

in Walpole's Report* against the late Administration—the base subservience to France, the infamous conditions in the Treaty of Utrecht, the heartless desertion of the Catalans, and the mean intrigues with the Pretender—will be ready enough to say with Walpole, "that he wants words to express the villainy of the late Frenchified Ministry." There can be no doubt that the Tories had been plotting to place the Pretender on the throne, and that, as for this purpose French aid was necessary, they had endeavoured to propitiate the Court of Versailles by a disloyal betrayal of English interests. The clauses in the Treaty of Utrecht were only so many bribes to the French to preserve the succession to the House of Stuart and to exclude the Elector from the throne of England. In the eyes of every Whig who could appreciate the change from government by prerogative to government by parliament, the return of the Stuarts to St. James's meant a terrible retrogression of affairs. It meant the Church of England undermined and held in check by Popery, a base dependence upon France, no sympathy between the Crown and the Legislature, a military Cæsarism, commercial stagnation, agricultural distress, and metropolitan misery.

Reform at its outset is always more stringent and severe than when its principles are firmly established and all fears of reaction removed. We must remember that parliamentary government was in its infancy, and that the Whigs, who had introduced the system, were naturally most jealous of its privileges and rights. Now, the leading principles of government by parliament are the personal irresponsibility of the Sovereign, the responsibility of Ministers, and the inquisitorial power of the Legislature.

* See seventh volume of the Parliamentary History. Appendix.

Walpole, and those with whom he acted, had only carried into practice the tenets of this Whig creed. It had been ascertained by a careful investigation of a committee of the House of Commons that the late advisers of the sovereign had scandalously betrayed the trust reposed in them by the Parliament and the people. They had advised the Queen to set aside a succession settled by Parliament in favour of one whom the country had solemnly pronounced unfit to sit upon the throne. They had been guilty of great treachery, their policy had brought disgrace upon the nation, and to save a dynasty they had dishonoured a country. In all their dealings their conduct had been mean, unmanly, and ill-befitting the representatives of a great people. Never in the history of Prosecution did statesmen more richly deserve the terrors of impeachment than those against whom Walpole raised his denouncing voice. That there was a bitterness in the charges against Bolingbroke which it would have been in better taste to avoid, I admit, but we cannot forget of what elements human nature is made, and that Walpole had been cruelly wronged by the gravest imputations upon his honour at the hands of the very man on whom it was now in his power to retaliate.

But though events had defeated the nefarious schemes of Bolingbroke and his accomplices, yet the seeds of discontent which they had sown were springing up in different parts of the country. Tory riots, High Church meetings, and Jacobite assemblies took place throughout the kingdom, in which the German King and his Whig advisers were freely hissed, whilst the Pretender and the French King, Bolingbroke and Ormond, were cheered to the echo. In several instances chapels were pulled down, much damage done to property, and the military called out. So grave was the

situation that Parliament was not prorogued, but only adjourned at short intervals.

These disturbances, however, were but mere affairs of outposts compared to the Jacobite insurrection which now broke out in Scotland. Into this brief but memorable struggle it is not the province of a biographer of Walpole to enter. The fiasco is familiar to all of us. Who is there who does not know of the march of Mar, the loyalty of Argyle, the surrender at Preston, the battle of Sheriffmuir, the appearance and sudden departure of "King James the Third," the agitation in England, and the punishment awarded to the rebels? Save the small part he took in denouncing the offenders at the close of the rebellion, Walpole left the conduct of affairs in the North to his brother-in-law Lord Townshend, and to Argyle, the most Hanoverian of Scotchmen. I say left, for the member for Lynn Regis was now in a position to command, had he so wished or deemed it necessary, his talents and steady adherence to the interests of the King having received the most signal acknowledgment it was in the power of the State to bestow. In the spring of the year 1715 Lord Halifax, the First Lord of the Treasury, died; he was succeeded by the Earl of Carlisle, a dull but respectable man, who speedily showed his incapacity for the honour done him. After a brief tenure of office his lordship resigned, and Walpole, by a leap so sudden that it plainly proved the high estimation in which he was held, was advanced to the vacant office. He was now but thirty-nine years of age.

But diligent attendance to his duties and the anxieties of the past were now beginning to tell upon his fine constitution, and his physicians enjoined positive rest and quiet for a time. It was whilst staying at Chelsea, whither

he had gone for change and repose, that the Septennial Bill, a measure which he in common with the chiefs of his party had always advocated, passed the Legislature after no little opposition. This bill, it has been well said, marks the era of the emancipation of the House of Commons from its former dependence upon the Crown and the Peers. Men were now able to give to the State what they had formerly been obliged to give to their constituents. By the Triennial Act, which fixed the duration of Parliament at three years, so as to obviate a repetition of the tactics of Charles II., a seat in the Lower House was always more or less shifting and uncertain. Scarcely had a member become familiar with the atmosphere of Parliament, and was beginning to be of use in the assembly, than it became necessary for him again to face his constituents and demand re-election. The consequence was that members of the House of Commons who, unlike Walpole, did not represent family boroughs felt themselves compelled to be constantly working their interest among their constituents, attending local meetings, and dealing with purely, and often petty, local matters, so as to ensure their return, instead of displaying their talents free and unfettered in the House of Commons.

The need for reform in the duration of Parliament was well stated by Steele in his speech for the repeal of the Triennial Act: "Ever since the Triennial Bill has been enacted," he said, "the nation has been in a series of contentions. The first year of a Triennial Parliament has been spent in vindictive decisions and animosities about the late elections. The second session has entered into business, but rather with a spirit of contradiction to what the prevailing set of men in former Parliaments had brought to pass

than for a disinterested zeal for the common good. The third session has languished in the pursuit of what little was intended to be done in the second; and the approach of an ensuing election has terrified the members into a servile management, according as their respective principals were disposed towards the question before them in the House. Thus the state of England has been like that of a vessel in distress at sea; the pilot and mariners have been wholly employed in keeping the ship from sinking; the art of navigation was useless, and they never pretended to make sail."* By changing the duration of Parliament from three to seven years the House of Commons gradually developed the powers intrusted to it by the system of parliamentary government till it assumed its present position, that of the centre and force of the State. Until the passing of the Septennial Bill the leader of either of the political parties had always a seat in the House of Lords. Walpole, the first to perceive the growth and strength of the House of Commons and the advantages to be gained by manipulating its majorities, preferred to remain in the Lower House.

Scarcely had this bill become law than another question, fraught with as much perplexity to the Ministry, was discussed at the Council Board. The King, tired with the factious disputes of Whig and Tory, bored by the habits and customs of his new country, and cursing freely the dampness of the climate, longed to revisit for a time his beloved Hanover, and to forget, amid the fair gardens, the quaint fountains, and the shady limes of Herrenhausen, that he had such a castle as Windsor or such a palace as St. James's. He wished once more to be surrounded by his German friends, to listen to the language of the Father-

* Stanhope's "History of England," vol. i. p. 306.

land, to be once more the King among his own people, instead of an exiled monarch in the midst of a strange and unsympathetic country. It was in vain the ministers did their utmost to dissuade their home-sick master from his purpose. Townshend wrote to Bernsdorf, the favourite counsellor of George, representing the inconveniences likely to arise from the King's journey to Hanover—how the Jacobites would make use of his absence to develop their intrigues, how desirable it was for his Majesty to remain at home in the present state of political complications abroad, and how hostile would be the construction put upon his departure by the enemies of his dynasty. But King George declined to be turned from his purpose. One difficulty alone made him hesitate for a time. The House of Hanover has never been celebrated for the affection existing between the head of the family and the heir-apparent. It has been a line, on the contrary, noted for its domestic feuds. George I. disliked his son the Prince of Wales; George II. disliked his son the Prince of Wales; George III. disliked his son the Prince of Wales. "It is a family," said Lord Carteret, "that has quarrelled from generation to generation, and always will quarrel."

What occasioned the feud between George I. and his heir, whether the father was jealous of the son, or hated him because he took the part of his mother, the unhappy Sophia of Zell, we know not, but the estrangement had existed for some time, and was cleverly kept up by the Tories, who encouraged the heir-apparent whilst the Whigs supported the father. Influenced by this unhappy and unnatural aversion, the King was most anxious that during his absence the Prince of Wales

should be prevented from acting as Regent. Finding, however, that he could not exclude him altogether from the post, George endeavoured to curb the Prince's authority by joining other persons in the commission; but on Lord Townshend assuring him that there was no precedent for such a step, the King was forced to abandon his opposition and let matters take their constitutional course. Still, on quitting England, the father refused to confer upon the son the title of Regent, but called him, instead, "Guardian of the Realm, and Lieutenant" —an office which had not been revived since the days of the Black Prince.

The departure of the King was the signal for an outbreak of political dissatisfaction, which had long been smouldering in the breasts of certain of his advisers. The Cabinet, in spite of all the tact of Townshend and Walpole, was divided against itself, and every day it became more difficult to preserve even the appearance of union. As usual, jealousy was the cause of the disagreement. Sunderland, who had been a loyal friend to the House of Hanover, and who was one of the most prominent Whigs of the day, felt his pride hurt at having to serve under Townshend. He had been appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and on the death of the Marquis of Wharton had become Privy Seal, but the office he coveted was the post of Secretary of State, held by Townshend. Nottingham, called "Dismal," from his lugubrious face, had been dismissed from office owing to his interference in favour of the rebel lords of the '15, and was now in close union with the Opposition. Somerset, on account of his defence of his Jacobitical son-in-law, Sir William Wyndham, had been obliged to resign his Mastership of

the Horse. Marlborough, though Commander-in-Chief, was an object of dislike to his royal master, who snubbed him on every occasion, and refused every favour the Great Duke solicited. "I don't well know what account to give you of our situation here," writes Walpole to his brother Horace, then negotiating diplomatic matters at the Hague. "There are storms in the air, but I doubt not they will soon be blown over."

In all probability this surmise of the writer would have come to pass had not two circumstances greatly tended to fan the flames of political hate. The existence of the German Junto which ruled the King, and the feud that reigned between the Prince of Wales and his father, were the first of these circumstances. The Junto consisted of the King's two favourite mistresses, Baron Bothmar, who had been the Hanoverian agent in England during the latter part of Queen Anne's reign, Count Bernsdorf, who advised his master upon all foreign affairs, and a Monsieur Robethon, the King's confidential secretary. Unfortunately both Townshend and Walpole had managed to offend every member of this German division. The favourites of the sovereign were most anxious to be created peeresses of Great Britain, an honour from which the Act of Settlement, mindful of the lavish favours distributed by William III., carefully excluded them. The Baroness of Schulemberg and the Countess of Kielmansegge were, however, pleased to attribute their exclusion from the coveted honours, not to the provisions of the law, but to the personal wishes of the ministers. Accordingly both these dames hated Townshend and Walpole with the most perfect cordiality.

Bothmar had been the chief means of raising Townshend to the office he filled, but had been much mortified at the

Secretary of State presuming to have an opinion of his own, and declining to accept the suggestions that the late Hanoverian agent was somewhat liberal in offering. Both Bothmar and Bernsdorf aspired to a seat in the House of Lords, and, like the women of the King, regarded the leaders of the Cabinet, and not the clauses of the Act of Settlement, as the real obstacles to the gratification of their ambition. Walpole had also found a most bitter enemy in Monsieur Robethon, who was as rapacious as he was arrogant, for having restrained him in his propensities for peculation. Thus the two ministers had not only to be on their guard against the intrigues of their disaffected colleagues, but also to defend themselves against the spite of those who were in the immediate friendship of the King.

A still further embarrassment was caused to the Ministry by the attitude of the Prince of Wales. Scarcely had the father arrived at the old palace of Herrenhausen than the son began to take upon himself the duties and responsibilities of a king in right earnest. Aware of the prejudices against his German birth and the German fashions of his family, he affected everything that was English. He tried to learn the language; he showed himself frequently amid the mob; he went on a tour of princely visits to the country houses of the great. His receptions, banquets, and other hospitalities were generously given and numerously attended; he was always gracious, affable, and visible. Thus it was not long before invidious comparisons were instituted between the father and the son. The Tories, glad of any division in the House of Hanover, and nothing loth to embarrass the actions of the Government, cordially espoused the party of the Prince of

Wales, and did all in their power to increase his influence. The worship of the rising sun is a creed that has never lacked disciples, and the discontented Whigs—men like Sunderland and Somerset—conscious that the Prince, now in opposition to his father, would one day be their sovereign, began to pay their court to his Royal Highness. The result of their tactics and intrigues was to make the position of Townshend and Walpole singularly perplexing. If they pleased the Prince, they offended the King; if they opposed the Prince, they laid themselves open to the hostility of the Tories.

A delicate point now arose with regard to the power of the Prince to open Parliament. The Tories supported the wishes of the heir-apparent; the Whigs, doubtful and hesitating, were anxious for instructions from their master. The political situation is well illustrated by a few extracts from the Walpole correspondence:—

"And now I have mentioned the Prince," writes Walpole to Stanhope, who was in attendance upon the King in Hanover,* "'tis fit you should know how it stands with him, which is in appearance much better than it was, and instead of pretty extraordinary treatment, we now meet civil receptions. He seems very intent upon holding the Parliament, very inquisitive about the revenue, calls daily for papers, which may tend to very particular informations; and I am not sure they are not more for other people's perusal than his own. By some things that daily drop from him, he seems to be preparing to keep up an interest of his in Parliament independent of the King's; but if that part is to be acted, I hope 'tis not impossible to bring him into other and better measures, but for this I do not

* "Stanhope Papers," August 10, 1716. Coxe.

pretend to answer. As for our behaviour to his Highness, we take care not to be wanting in duty and respect, not to give any offence or handle to such as are ready to take any opportunity to render business impracticable, and we hope to demean ourselves so, that neither they who would misrepresent us to the King for making our court too much to the Prince, nor they who would hurt us with the Prince for doing it too little, can have any fair advantage over us; but this is a game not to be managed without difficulty. Lord Townshend goes to-morrow to live at Hampton Court; I shall go twice a week, and on those public days we both shall keep tables. This is a burden not to be avoided, and what is expected from us, since 'twas determined that neither King nor Prince would keep a green-cloth table, and the white staffs are generally gone to their respective homes, except Lord Steward. The Duke of Argyle comes constantly to court, appears in public, and has his private audiences, and not without influence."

Before his departure the King had insisted that the Duke of Argyle, whom he suspected of encouraging ambitious and disloyal views in the mind of his son, should resign his post as Groom of the Stole to his Royal Highness, and be debarred from constant communication with the Prince. From Walpole we see how the wishes of the monarch were carried out:—

"By a letter I wrote to you some time since," again writes Walpole to Stanhope,* "I gave you the best account I then could of the state of our affairs. What I have now to add from the occurrences that have since happened is to tell you, that not only the Duke of Argyle

* "Harrington Papers," August 18, 1716. Coxe.

and Lord Isla, &c., but the Duke of Shrewsbury, Dick Hill, Lord Rochester, and their wives, and other Tories, are constant attendants at Hampton Court. They generally choose to come on private days; but their reception gives great offence to all well-wishers, and, I assure you, does not a little animate the Tories, who generally, I mean such as are near the town, resort to Court, and meet all possible encouragement to go on so. I cannot but say *the Prince is civil to us, but that is all that I can say*, which is now so well known and understood that the Tories take great pains to publish it; that *the Prince hates us, and, at the same time, that we are almost lost with the King, having all the foreigners determined against us.* This is the situation which the world looks upon us to be in, which, if it be true, as far as relates to your side of the water, it is very desirable that we should know it, to take our measures accordingly; and if it is not true, I am sure it is absolutely necessary that some method should be found out to make the contrary known, for no man can serve in this nation whose credit with the Prince is supposed to be lost or declining."

"We are here chain'd to the oar, and working like slaves," grumbles Walpole a few days later to his correspondent,* "and are looked upon as no other; for not only the behaviour and conduct of the Prince are a weight upon us, but the industrious representations that are made of our being lost with the King reduces our credit to nothing. If we are to be the King's servants, and to be supported in serving him as king, our hands must be strengthened. A known division among ourselves, which common danger, if the King pleases, he may remedy, the

* "Stanhope Papers," August 20, 1716. Coxe.

appearance of a declining interest with the King, and the unalterable resentment of the Prince, however, at present disguised, against such as he looks upon attached to the service of the King preferable to his interest, leave us in a situation scarce to be weathered through. We know of no remedy to these evils but the King's return."

Such was the state of domestic affairs; the Cabinet divided against itself, the Prince and the Tories intriguing to form a party hostile to the King, the efforts of Townshend and Walpole wilfully misrepresented on both sides. Nor were the complications on the Continent a whit less embarrassing to the two ministers. Hanover was the centre of a series of diplomatic movements. France, in the person of the Regent, Duke of Orleans, began to bid for the support of England. Louis XV. was a sickly child, and his uncle the Regent was anxious that in the event of his nephew's death the House of Orleans should succeed to the crown of France. The Abbé Dubois was appointed to sound the Cabinet of St. James's. Various reasons now rendered it desirable that a union should exist between England and France. Discordant elements had entered into the once Grand Alliance. Austria and the States-General were at daggers drawn with respect to the Barrier Treaty which was to determine the boundaries of the Netherlands. Between Austria and England there was a coolness owing to certain claims by the Elector of Hanover. The States-General, it is true, were still stanch to the interests of England, but the States-General were now no longer the formidable confederacy of other days, but weak, supine, and divided.

An alliance between England and France would be of great service to each country. By it France would preserve

the succession in the family of Orleans, should Louis XV. die without issue—an arrangement very advantageous to England, which had no wish to see Spain and France ruled by the same king; whilst at the same time the Hanoverian dynasty would be preserved from the intrigues of the Jacobites. An active correspondence therefore ensued between Whitehall and the Palais Royal. Two express demands were made by England before any thoughts of an alliance could be entertained. The first was, that the new harbour at Mardyke, which the French had begun to construct upon the demolition of the port of Dunkirk, should be abandoned; and the second that the Pretender should be forced to quit Lorraine and retire across the Alps. After much discussion and diplomatic fencing between Stanhope and Dubois, France agreed to the terms of England. An alliance between the two countries was entered into; the canal at Mardyke was to be filled up; the Pretender was to be dismissed from French territory; and England guaranteed the succession of the crown of France to the House of Orleans should Louis XV. die childless.

Whilst these negotiations with the Regent were proceeding, the Ministry had to deal with grave issues in the North. By the Peace of Westphalia, the rich districts of Bremen and Verden, objects on which the House of Brunswick had always greedily fixed its eyes, had been ceded to Sweden. But the ambition of Charles XII. having caused him to be surrounded by enemies, Frederick IV. of Denmark, taking advantage of the King of Sweden's absence in Turkey, entered the territories of Sleswick, Holstein, Bremen, and Verden, and quietly annexed them. Apprised of the move on the

part of his old enemy, Charles hastened northwards to defend his own dominions. Denmark, terrified at the return of the formidable monarch, and conscious that she could not without additional assistance retain her recently acquired conquests, entered into a treaty with the Elector of Hanover. By this treaty Frederick agreed to hand over Bremen and Verden to the Elector on condition that Hanover should join the coalition against Sweden and pay a sum of £150,000. King George at once accepted the offer, and a British squadron under the command of Sir John Norris was dispatched to the Baltic to compel Sweden to comply with the terms of this predatory treaty.

Certainly a more disgraceful negotiation men of honour never entered into. The King of England had agreed to play the part of a receiver of stolen goods and was determined to uphold his theft with the strong arm of the sword. Let us suppose that at the time when France was pressed on all sides by her mighty German foe, Spain had seized upon Nice and had then sold her conquest to England for a pecuniary consideration; would a modern House of Commons have ever justified such a purchase, or still more have dispatched a fleet to maintain the ill-gotten prize? The Pretender certainly struck home when in his declaration issued from Lorraine he said, "Whilst the principal Powers engaged in the late wars enjoy the blessings of peace and are attentive to discharge their debt and ease their people, Great Britain, in the midst of peace, feels all the load of a war, new debts are contracted, new armies are raised at home, Dutch forces are brought into these kingdoms, and by taking possession of the Duchy of Bremen *in violation of the public faith*, a door is opened by the Usurper to let in an inundation of foreigners from

abroad, and to reduce these nations to a state of dependence on one of the most inconsiderable provinces of the Empire."

It has been said that both Townshend and Walpole were averse to this nefarious acquisition, but, whatever were the views of Walpole, his brother-in-law was certainly not opposed to the annexation. "I must tell you frankly," writes Townshend to Slingelandt, afterwards Pensionary of Holland, "without any partiality to the pretensions of the King, but simply with a view to the interests of Great Britain and Holland, that we must not suffer Sweden to retain any longer those gates of the empire [Bremen and Verden] which since the Peace of Westphalia she has never made use of but for the purpose of introducing confusion and disorder, or of turning Germany from the pursuit of its true interest against France." And again, "I lay it down as a principle that, for the advantage and tranquillity of Europe, the King of Sweden ought to be deprived of those provinces which have supplied him with the means of doing so much mischief." * What were the sentiments of Walpole in the matter we know not, but it is probable they were in accord with those of his colleague. The result of this negotiation was to make Sweden a bitter enemy of England, and Stockholm a hotbed for Jacobite intrigues.

But a blacker cloud now sprang up in the diplomatic sky. Between Peter the Great, who was rapidly developing the vast resources of Russia, and the Elector of Hanover a strong and mutual feeling of dislike existed. "*Cette haine*," writes the Duc de St. Simon, "*a duré toute leur vie et dans la plus vive aigreur.*" It so happened that a severe dispute reigned in the Duchy of Mecklenburg between the Duke and his subjects. Peter the Great

* See Coxe, vol. i. p. 87.

espoused the cause of the Duke, who had married his niece, and suddenly marched a large body of troops into the duchy. Denmark interfered, but was informed by the haughty Czar that unless she desisted Muscovite regiments would speedily be quartered upon her territories. It was also said that the Duke had signed a treaty with the Czar, agreeing to give up his country in exchange for Livonia and other districts.

These high-handed proceedings and this un-Teutonic arrangement naturally excited a ferment among the Emperor and his vassal princelings. The Elector of Hanover, now that both his national and personal feelings were crossed, was most furious. He was a German and not an Englishman, and it mattered little to him what grave harm the gratification of his spite might occasion to his new kingdom across the North Sea. He wrote to his ministers, through Stanhope, desiring that the Czar should be crushed immediately, his ships sunk or secured, and even his august person be taken captive. Instructions were to be sent to Sir John Norris, then in command of the fleet in the Baltic, to that effect. But neither Townshend nor Walpole had any wish that their country should be embroiled in a northern war; and Stanhope was desired to inform his Majesty that a rupture between Great Britain and Russia would be most impolitic, that peace, even at a sacrifice, should be made with Sweden, and that the squadron of Sir John Norris should return home. Happily a crisis was ultimately prevented by the Czar acceding to the request of Denmark and Austria, and withdrawing his troops from Mecklenburg.

Still, whilst this northern agitation was proceeding, the King became most desirous that the treaty between

France and England, then being negotiated, should be signed. A hitch, however, now occurred. The British plenipotentiaries at the Hague, General Cadogan and Horace Walpole, a younger brother of Sir Robert, had pledged themselves to the States that no treaty between England and France should ever be signed without including the Dutch. It was now found that the fashion of diplomacy in the States was extremely slow, and as the King was very anxious, in the present state of northern affairs, to have France as an ally, he desired that the treaty should be concluded without the signature of the Dutch, a clause, however, being inserted that whenever the States pleased they could be made parties to it. Horace Walpole, declining to break his word, begged permission to return home, and left the signing of the treaty to Cadogan.

Owing to Horace Walpole's refusal, Townshend was not so expeditious as he might have been in issuing his instructions to conclude the treaty, and thus gave his enemies a handle whereby to disparage him in the eyes of the King. The delay was unfortunate, for neither the Secretary of State nor the First Lord of the Treasury could well afford at this time to lose any portion of their monarch's regard. The tactics of the disaffected and of the German Junto were soon to be crowned with success. In addition to the offence he had given in having united with his brother-in-law in snubbing the demand of the Hanoverian favourites, and in having baiked the Elector's designs upon the Baltic, Walpole had personally drawn upon himself his sovereign's displeasure. On the breaking out of the Jacobite insurrection in 1715, the regiments of Munster and Saxe Gotha were enrolled among the British troops. After the flight of the Pre-

tender and the defeat of the rebels there was no need for retaining the German legion, but as an agreement had been entered into with regard to their services, they received a sum of money on being dismissed. This payment the King had advanced out of his private purse, on the understanding, so he alleged, that he would be refunded by the Treasury. Unfortunately Walpole, whom the King charged with having made this promise, protested before God that he could not recollect ever having made such a statement; "but," added he, with the politeness of the courtier, "my memory must fail me when his Majesty says the contrary." The probability is, as Earl Stanhope, the historian, suggests, that both the monarch and the minister were right. King George could speak no English, Walpole was ignorant both of French and German, and when they had occasion to address each other they spoke dog-Latin, "and nothing could be more probable than that they should misunderstand each other."

But the interviews between the two were now to come to an end. It would seem as if the fates had resolved that the ministers should in everything offend their master and his friends. On all sides Townshend and Walpole created enemies. The King was irritated with them for having checked his foreign policy. Baron Bothmar was irritated with them for interfering with his plans, by which he hoped to obtain some plunder out of the Island of St. Christopher, which had been ceded to England by France at the Treaty of Utrecht. "He has every day some infamous project or other on foot to get money," writes Townshend angrily to Stanhope. The Duchess of Kendal was irritated with them for having objected to raise Sir Richard Child, a prominent Tory in

the House of Commons, to the peerage; her Grace having been well bribed by Sir Richard to further his cause. And to make matters worse the evil Sunderland was now at Hanover insidiously maligning his late colleagues and intriguing for the favour of the King.

Such were the relations between the Court and the Cabinet, when a dispatch from Townshend brought matters to a crisis. In this document the Secretary of State begged to know when his Majesty would return to England, stated the desire of the Prince of Wales to open Parliament, and suggested that a discretionary power should be vested in the Prince.* The King, poisoned by the insinuations of Sunderland, that the ministers were playing into the hands of the Prince of Wales, and caballing to set the son above the father, was furious on the receipt of this dispatch. He declared that Townshend should give up his seals of office, and feel the full brunt of the royal anger. Stanhope, who though keenly anxious to obtain the post of Secretary, yet knew how high Townshend was held in the estimation not only of his own party but of the foreign powers, suggested that, instead of being dismissed from office, he should exchange his present appointment for the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland. His Majesty agreed to the proposal, and wrote to Townshend to this effect. In a loyal manly letter, vindicating himself from all the aspersions cast upon his character, Townshend at first declined to accept the office of Lord-Lieutenant, but, softened by certain promises made to him by the King, thought it expedient to change his mind.

His administration was, however, soon to be overthrown. Parliament was opened by the King in person on the 20th

* "Walpole Papers," September 25, 1716. Coxe.

February, 1717. A grave topic came immediately under discussion. Sweden, mindful of the Elector's conduct with regard to Bremen and Verden, had leagued herself with the Jacobites, and meditated an invasion of Great Britain. Her designs were discovered, owing to the correspondence of the Swedish envoy in London being intercepted, and retaliatory measures were proposed by the English Cabinet. It was moved in the House of Commons that supplies should be granted to the King to proceed against the Scandinavian foe. Walpole, as leader of the House, was expected to give the motion every support; but, irritated at the removal of Townshend, and at the ascendancy of Sunderland and Stanhope in the royal closet, he contented himself with delivering a few brief and cold remarks in its favour. His cue was followed by all on his side of the House who respected Townshend, and these swelling the ranks of the Jacobites, Tories, and disaffected Whigs, the motion of supply was passed only by a majority of four votes. The King apprised of this resistance, at the instigation of Sunderland and Stanhope, declared it to be most unwise to retain in power those whose influence was so opposed to the interests and policy of the Court, and who could command such formidable support. Townshend was accordingly dismissed from the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland.

There is little doubt his enemies would have issued the same order to Walpole had he not thwarted their animosity by waiting upon the King the next morning and resigning his places of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. "When Lord Townshend," writes Horace Walpole, the brother of Sir Robert,* "was (after

* "Walpole Papers." Horace Walpole to the Rev. H. Etough, October 12, 1751. Coxe.

he had been made Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland at Hanover, instead of Secretary of State), upon his Majesty's return to England, entirely dismissed, my brother waited upon the King the next day, to give up the seal as Chancellor of the Exchequer, at which his Majesty seemed extremely surprised, and absolutely refused to accept it, expressing himself in the kindest and strongest terms, that he had no thoughts of parting with him; and in a manner begging him not to leave his service, returned the seal, which my brother had laid upon the table in the closet, into his hat, as well as I can remember, ten times. His Majesty took it at last, not without expressing great concern, as well as resentment at my brother's perseverance; in which contest, among other things, he told his Majesty that, were he ever so well inclined, it was impossible to serve him faithfully with those ministers to whom he had lately given his favour and credit. For that they would propose to him as Chancellor of the Exchequer, as well as in Parliament, such things that, if he should agree to and support, he should lose his credit and reputation in the world, and should he not approve or oppose them, he should lose his Majesty's favour. For he, in his station, though not the author, must be answerable to his King and country for any extraordinary measure. To conclude this remarkable event, I was in the room next to the closet, waiting for my brother, and when he came out, the heat, flame, and agitation, with the water standing in his eyes, appeared so strongly in his face, and indeed all over him, that he affected everybody in the room; and 'tis said that they that went into the closet immediately found the King no less disordered."

The example of Walpole was followed by the rest of his

colleagues, and a new Ministry formed. Stanhope became First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Duke of Bolton succeeded Townshend as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and Sunderland and Addison were appointed the Secretaries of State. Lord Cowper and the Duke of Kingston were the only two of the late administration who retained their places.

Thus fell the Townshend-Walpole Ministry—the victims of intrigue, falsehood, and odious treachery. Let those who think its overthrow merited read the Harrington, Stanhope, and Townshend papers collected by the laborious Archdeacon Coxe. There they will see every charge brought against the two ministers fully and clearly refuted. By the light of that voluminous correspondence, the honour of Townshend and the integrity of Walpole stand out as pure and unsullied as the malice of Sunderland and the double-dealing of Stanhope appear mean and black. Three grave accusations were made against the ministers. It was said that they had delayed, for treasonable purposes of their own, the signing of the treaty with France; that they had intrigued with the Duke of Argyle and the Earl of Isla; and that, while professing loyalty to the King, they were playing into the hands of the Prince.

The first charge Townshend, in a long letter to the King,* completely refutes, showing that, on the contrary, he did all in his power to expedite matters, and was not in any way accessory to the refusal of Horace Walpole in declining to sign the treaty separately without the Dutch. This refutation is borne out by the words of Horace Walpole himself. "I think myself authorised to say this," he

* "Townshend Papers," November 22, 1716. Coxe.

writes to Stanhope,* "because I am sensible the difficulty I made in relation to the particular signing with France was one of the chiefest grounds of your jealousy; and I protest before God that what I did came purely from myself, and *my Lord Townshend earnestly exhorted me to the contrary.*" Indeed so clear was Townshend's justification of his conduct upon this point that his enemies had to abandon the charge. But the mischief had already been done—Townshend had been dismissed from office, and though the King, as Count Bernsdorf said, much regretted that he had acted so impetuously in the matter, still it was not consistent with his Majesty's dignity to reinstate the minister in his former office. Why it was inconsistent with the royal dignity frankly to acknowledge an error, and to restore the seals to Townshend, I fail to see.

The denial of the ministers concerning the charge of intimacy with the Duke of Argyle and Lord Isla, two notoriously discontented Whigs, is equally explicit.

"Another reason of his Majesty's displeasure, I am told," writes Townshend to his friend Slingelandt,† "has been my suppos'd caballing with the Duke of Argyle, and undertaking to procure his reconciliation with the King; in relation to which, I can safely affirm that since the King's leaving England *I have never had the least conversation with the Duke of Argyle* (otherwise than accidentally at Court, in the eye and hearing of everybody) except once at his request, from which he parted highly dissatisfied with my brother Walpole and me, for having tutor'd him (as he called it) for two hours together. And, indeed, the whole subject of our conversation was to convince him, that the

* "Harrington Papers," December 8, 1716. Coxe.
† "Townshend Papers," January 12, 1717. Coxe.

only possible method for him ever to hope to recover the King's favour was to show an entire submission to his Majesty, and to behave himself without any signs of resentment in Parliament."

"As for any secret intimacies," writes Walpole to Stanhope,* "or management undertaken with the two brothers [Argyle and Isla], *if there be the least handle, or one instance can be given of it, call me for ever villain;* if not, think as you please of those that say or write this."

And what is the answer given by both of the ministers to the charge of conspiring with the Prince against the authority of the King?

"But the last and blackest imputation," writes Townshend to Slingelandt,† "is what is contain'd in a letter, which I have seen, under Lord Sunderland's own hand, of the same date with those which brought my dismission, in which he directly charges the Lord Chancellor, my brother Walpole, and me with having entered into engagements with the Prince and Duke of Argyle, and form'd designs against the King's authority. The fatal consequences of any misunderstanding between the King and Prince are so very obvious, and the bare insinuation of such a design as is implied in Lord Sunderland's letter, is a charge of so high and extensive a nature, that it is hard to conceive how so much villainy and infatuation could possess the heart of any man as to suggest such an infamous accusation, not only without evidence, but without the least colour or pretence. Since it will be easy to make it appear from every step of the Prince's behaviour, that he has confined himself strictly to the limitations

* "Harrington Papers," December 23, 1716. Coxe.
† "Townshend Papers," January 12, 1717. Coxe.

prescrib'd by the King his father; and that he has never exercised the least power of any kind without taking respective opinions and advice of those in whose hands the King thought fit to leave the several offices and departments of public business. . . . . *And I defy my Lord Sunderland, or any one else, to produce one single instance of my having made an ill use of the confidence with which his Royal Highness was pleased to honour me,* or of the Prince's having invaded the royal prerogative in any the minutest branch, or having deviated, in any particular of his behaviour, since his Majesty's leaving England, from that entire duty and submission which he ought always to show towards the King his father."

"What is given out here," writes Walpole to Stanhope, "and published from letters from among you, in regard to the Prince, I cannot but take notice of, and will stake my all upon this single issue, *if one instance can be given of our behaviour to the Prince but what was necessary to carry on the King's service,* and we never had a thought but with a just and due regard to the King as our king and master."

The overthrow of the Townshend-Walpole Ministry was due to no fault of its own. It was innocent of the intrigues and treacheries attributed to it. Its conduct of affairs, both at home and abroad, was spirited without being aggressive, economical without being parsimonious, and just without being rigorous. Save the Bremen and Verden transaction, there is little in its administration to condemn. The ministers fell because they could not withstand the spite of the discontented Whigs, because they could not cope with the insidious designs of Stanhope and Sunderland, because they had, as Englishmen, rightly

thwarted the Hanoverian foreign policy of their King, and because they had strictly carried out the provisions of the Act of Settlement in opposing the demands of the German Junto. The causes which occasioned their dismissal read only as so many evidences of their honour and their patriotism.

CHAPTER V.

FINANCIAL MEASURES. 1717—1720.

THE resignation of Walpole was looked upon as a grievous loss to the country. Throughout the whole of the Stanhope correspondence preserved by Coxe we see how high was the estimation in which he was held even by the enemies of the late administration. As the leader in the House of Commons he knew exactly how to propitiate the assembly—how to win it by good humour, and how to subdue it by firmness. When his voice was raised in favour of a measure it seldom failed to become law, whilst his opposition was equivalent to immediate rejection. Though officially second to Townshend, it was really Walpole who was supreme in the Cabinet. In foreign affairs he left the principal direction to his brother-in-law, but whenever any knotty point of international law had to be argued, or wording of a treaty discussed, it was the member for Lynn Regis whose opinion was the first asked.

But it was in domestic matters that the abilities of Walpole were chiefly displayed. As head of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer he was in a position exactly suited for the exercise of his peculiar talents. Ever since he had regarded politics as a profession the study of finance had been his favourite occupation. He had made himself familiar with the commercial policy of

every Government in Europe, and could thus bring to bear upon his subject, not merely the theories of the mathematician, but the practical qualities of the statesman and the man of business.

The question of the reduction of the National Debt had latterly engrossed all his attention. At this time our debt amounted to some fifty millions, and though, by a statute passed in the reign of Queen Anne, the rate of common interest for money had been reduced to five per cent., yet in the Funds the rate was as high as eight per cent., and of these funds the Irredeemable debts, or Long and Short annuities, could not be touched without the absolute consent of the proprietors. Walpole now propounded a scheme, the forerunner of all national sinking funds, for the consideration of the country and its creditors. He proposed to borrow six hundred thousand pounds at four per cent., and to apply all the savings that accrued from the intended redemptions to the discharge of the principal and interest of the debts contracted before the end of the year 1716. At the same time he entered into negotiations with the Bank of England and South Sea Companies for the raising of a loan to pay off such holders of Redeemable debts as might refuse to accept an equal reduction—the Bank of England to lend two millions and a half at five per cent., the South Sea Company two millions.

Unfortunately, just as this arrangement had overcome the opposition that novelties usually engender, and was on the point of being discussed by the Legislature, Walpole retired from office. Indeed on the very day that he tendered his resignation he laid his financial scheme before Parliament. He introduced the bill by stating that he no longer held office, but though he

presented his measure simply as a private member and not as a First Lord of the Treasury and a Chancellor of the Exchequer, yet he hoped that "it would not fare the worse for having two fathers, and that his successor would take care to bring it to perfection." His wish was realised. Stanhope, thanks to the support of Walpole, successfully piloted the measure through Parliament, and early in the session it became law. In the monument raised to the memory of Stanhope in Westminster Abbey we read these words: "*Delicatam publicarum pecuniarum fidem, temperato solerter fœnore, conservavit integram.*" "I am bound to say," writes Earl Stanhope, "that I think this praise belongs not to Stanhope but to Walpole."* It was scarcely necessary to make the admission, for there can be no two opinions as to whom the credit is due. Stanhope is not the first politician who has benefited by the labours and originality of a predecessor.

In former days a warm friendship had reigned between Walpole and Stanhope, but this had now given place to bitter estrangement on account of the conduct of Stanhope in prejudicing the King against Townshend. Walpole attributed much of the downfall of the late administration to the intrigues of his successor at Hanover, and we see in his correspondence how warm his feelings had once been, and how circumstances had tended to freeze them. It was impossible, therefore, now that Stanhope was in power and Walpole in opposition, that passages of arms could be avoided. One parliamentary duel between the two has been recorded, because it throws a light upon the causes which led to the resignation of the late First Lord of the Treasury. The financial scheme was

* "History of England," vol i. p. 410.

being discussed in committee; Stanhope, irritated at his ignorance of the subject which he had to pass through the Commons, and nettled at having to be so dependent upon Walpole's superior knowledge of political economy, vented his spleen in these words: "He ingenuously owned," he said, "his incapacity for the affairs of the Treasury, which were so remote from his studies and inclinations that, therefore, he would fain have kept the employment he had before, which was both more easy and profitable to him, but that he thought it his duty to obey the King's commands; that, however, he would endeavour to make up by application, honesty, and disinterestedness, what he wanted in abilities and experience; that he would content himself with the salary and lawful perquisites of his office; and, though he had quitted a better place, he would not quarter himself upon anybody to make it up; *that he had no brothers nor other relations to provide for; and that, on his first entering into the Treasury, he had made a standing order against the late practice of granting reversions of places.*"

There could be no doubt against whom these insinuations were directed. Walpole, when in power, acting in accordance with the official fashion of his day, had looked upon the State as a very convenient institution to satisfy the claims of friendship and provide for the future of younger sons. The consequence was that the Civil Service estimates were not lightly burdened with salaries either for the relations of the Squire of Houghton or for his political supporters. Walpole answered the taunt with his usual courage and frankness. After complaining that Stanhope had committed a breach of friendship and had been guilty of betraying private conversations,

the ex-minister candidly admitted that when in office he had endeavoured to serve his friends and relations; than which, in his opinion, nothing was more reasonable and just. "As to the granting of reversions," he added, "I am willing to acquaint the House with the meaning of the charge which is now urged against me. I have no objections to the German ministers, whom the King brought with him from Hanover, and who, as far as I had observed, had behaved themselves like men of honour; but there is a mean fellow (alluding to Robethon),. of what nation I know not, who is eager to dispose of employments. This man, having obtained the grant of a reversion, which he designed for his son, I thought it too good for him, and therefore reserved it for my own son. On this disappointment, the foreigner was so impertinent as to demand £2,500, under pretence that he had been offered that sum for the reversion; but I was wiser than to comply with his demands. And, I am bold to acknowledge, one of the chief reasons that made me resign was because I could not connive at some things that were carrying on."* It would have been well if the conduct of Walpole had always been as scrupulous.

Shortly after his resignation he had been attacked by

* I give the list as compiled by Archdeacon Coxe:—

Places held by or for the Family of Sir Robert Walpole.

		Per annum.
1721.	Collector of the port of London, by Henry Hare and Robert Mann, during the lives of Robert Walpole, junior, and E. Walpole, junior, Esquires, sons of Sir Robert Walpole. The reversion of this place was granted on the 28th June, 1716, and came into possession in 1721. It was held by deed of trust, at the disposal of Sir Robert Walpole . . .	£2,000
April 5, 1721.	Robert Walpole, junior, Clerk of the Pells . .	3,000
July 21, 1725.	Robert Lord Walpole, Ranger of Richmond Park.	

various members of his own party for having withdrawn from the Ministry in order to gratify a private pique, thus widening the schism among the Whigs and depriving the King of his valuable counsels. In his vindication against these accusations, Walpole replied, "That persons who had accepted places in the Government had often been reflected on for carrying on designs, and acting contrary to the interest of their country; but that he had never heard a man arraigned for laying down one of the most profitable places in the kingdom: that for his own part, if he would have complied with some measures, it had not been in the power of any of the present ministers to remove him; but that he had reasons for resigning his employments, with which he had acquainted his Majesty, and might perhaps, in a proper time, declare them to the House. In the meanwhile the tenor of his conduct should show that he never intended to make the King uneasy or to embarrass his affairs."

This honourable and patriotic intention was, however, soon abandoned. One of the great drawbacks to parliamentary government is the readiness with which every measure can be converted into a party question. A bill is introduced by the Ministry and at once is criticized

		Per annum.
Nov. 17, 1727.	E. Walpole, Clerk of the Pleas in the Court of Exchequer	£400
	E. Walpole, Secretary to the Treasury.	
	„ „ to the Duke of Devonshire as Lord-Lieutenant.	
Feb. 4, 1737.	H. Walpole, junior, Usher of the Receipt of the Exchequer	2,000
Nov. 9, 1738.	H. Walpole, junior, Comptroller of the Great Roll	
Nov. 1, 1738.	„ „ Clerk or Keeper of the Foreign Estreats . . .	500
May 9, 1739.	Robert Lord Walpole, Auditor of the Exchequer .	7,000
	Edward Walpole, Clerk of the Pells, on the surrender of Robert Lord Walpole.	

in a hostile spirit by the Opposition, not because it is a measure bad in itself—for had it every virtue its fate would be the same—but simply because it is the duty of the Opposition to disparage every action of the Government. A statesman, either out of pique or from an unsatisfied ambition, or it may be from purely conscientious motives, separates himself from his colleagues; at once he begins to dissent from every scheme proposed by the Cabinet. This antagonism often produces startling inconsistencies of conduct. Some who have warmly supported a certain policy when in power are seen vehemently to oppose it when out of office. Others, who have exhausted all the invectives of parliamentary oratory against a particular politician, bitterly inveighing against his principles and his conduct, are seen, perhaps, shortly afterwards, side by side with the anathematized politician, carrying out his instructions and upholding his honour. How many instances are to be found in the annals of the present century of measures stoutly advocated when in opposition, only to be coolly abandoned when in power; of a policy maintained when in power, only to be repudiated when in opposition; and of unholy alliances between men who supported what they formerly denounced, and denounced what they formerly supported! To most people such conduct appears weak, spiteful, and unscrupulous, but to the legislator it is only one out of several methods by which the machinery of parliamentary government is worked. Party, like charity, covers a multitude of sins.

Walpole had now to pursue this course of political audacity. Though on the side of the Whigs, he was hotly opposed to the existing administration, and a statesman

who still adheres to his party whilst at variance with its recognised leaders is always far more formidable and mischievous than one who goes into open opposition. No part is more damaging than that of the candid friend. Walpole, aware of this, had now but one object in view—to hamper the actions of Stanhope, so as to embarrass his direction of affairs and oust him from the confidence of the King. It mattered little that to effect his purpose the quondam First Lord would have to ban what he once blessed or thwart what he once advocated. He considered every expedient fair and every infringement of the code of honour allowable, provided that by such means he could shatter the Cabinet of the present advisers of the Crown.

Here for the first time in a political career that had hitherto been highly honourable we meet with the two great faults in the character of Walpole—his intense selfishness and his boundless ambition. He loved office, not wisely, but too well; not as the statesman whose sole policy is to rule for the welfare of his country, for the prosperity of its people, and for the honour of its flag, but as the statesman who so keenly appreciates the power, the pomp, and the patronage of office, that to possess himself of its advantages there is little he will not dare and do. To Walpole politics was only another word for the Treasury Bench—for the identification of his own good with that of the country. In after years, when placed at the head of the nation, his policy was guided solely by the light of self-interest. If a certain line of action would strengthen his administration he pursued it, indifferent whether such a course was of advantage or of disadvantage to the country. If a measure was calculated to relax his hold of power, no matter how

beneficial such a measure might be to the nation, he never scrupled to raise his voice in opposition. The safety of his own administration was his first thought—all other matters were subservient. Seldom has a statesman been influenced by a narrower and more selfish creed; never has such a creed, in spite of its selfishness, ministered so much to the peace and prosperity of a people.

It may be asked why, if Walpole was so passionately in love with office, and so anxious to return to it, did he of his own free will and against the wishes of his sovereign resign? The answer is not difficult to find. Men influenced by a boundless greed for power never care to tolerate rivals or coadjutors. In the Townshend Ministry, though Walpole nominally held the second place, it was really the First Lord who was, as I have said, the presiding spirit and the leader in the Cabinet. On the accession of Stanhope and Sunderland to office, the member for Lynn Regis knew that his rivals would do all in their power to curb his authority, checkmate his counsels, and mortify his pride. Rather than suffer such annoyance, he preferred to deliver up the seals, knowing that, with his influence in the House of Commons, it would be but a question of time for his rivals to be dismissed, and for him to be reinstated in power. Accordingly, whilst adhering to his party, he went into factious opposition, and assailed, with a bitterness few Tories could equal, every scheme of the Government.

History affords many examples of political apostasy, but few more unblushing than the instance Walpole was now to exhibit. When Bolingbroke ushered in his Schism Bill in 1714, which was to crush the power of the Dissenters by its fierce intolerance, Walpole hotly declared that such a measure appeared more like a decree

of Julian the Apostate than a law enacted by a Protestant Parliament, since it was calculated to raise as great a persecution against our Protestant brethren as the Primitive Christians ever suffered from the heathen Emperors or the Protestants from the Inquisition. He now opposed the repeal of the Schism Bill. We remember how zealous he was in framing the impeachment of Oxford—how he was chairman of the Secret Committee, and how the report bringing such heavy accusations against the fallen minister was due almost entirely to his pen. He now connived at the acquittal of Oxford. None knew better than Walpole the dangers that menaced England—the Jacobites plotting against the crown in England, the Highland clans disaffected in Scotland, Sweden ready to befriend the Pretender, the preparations of Spain—yet, simply because Stanhope advocated an increase in the military strength of the country, the ex-minister spoke vehemently in favour of reducing the army. Nay, he even did his best to oppose the Mutiny Bill, exclaiming, in the heat of debate, "He that is for blood shall have blood!" In common with the rest of the discontented Whigs, he zealously supported the frivolous and malicious inquiry into the conduct of Lord Cadogan for having transported Dutch troops to and from Great Britain at the time of the rebellion. Well might Shippen, the leader of the Jacobites in the House of Commons, call Walpole "his new ally."

Nor was the friendship or enmity of Walpole a matter of small moment. So high did he stand in the opinion of the House that a few hostile words from his lips wrought more hurt in the ranks of the Government than elaborate speeches from the rest of the Opposition. When it was

known how he would vote, Stanhope trembled at the result of the division, so influential was the following that Walpole took with him into the lobby. The Cabinet therefore had to exercise all its tact and courage to resist the incessant attacks of its unsparing foe. Not a motion proposed by the advisers of the Crown, whether relating to foreign or domestic matters, but met with the keen hostility of Walpole's criticism. He exposed the financial blunders of the Government, defended all, even the most open Jacobites, who attacked its policy, and strenuously opposed the Quadruple Alliance that had been formed at the instigation of France.*

But it was in the debate on the Peerage Bill that the opposition of Walpole put forth all its strength, and showed of what it was capable. The Ministry, desirous of frustrating the attempts of the German favourites to obtain English titles, and to prevent a repetition of the tactics of Lord Oxford, had resolved upon introducing a measure limiting the royal prerogative in the creation of peers. As it was known that the Prince of Wales, when he ascended the throne, had given out his intention of

* Philip V. of Spain, having lost his first queen, married in 1714 Elizabeth Farnese, heiress-presumptive of the Duchies of Parma and Placentia. This marriage was chiefly brought about by Alberoni, an intriguing Italian priest, who was omnipotent at the Court of Madrid, and who used his power among the disaffected in England, France, and Scotland to aggrandize the dominions of Spain. These intrigues induced the Regent of France to enter into a league with England, Holland, and the Emperor for the purpose of limiting Spanish ambition. This league was called the Quadruple Alliance, and was signed August 2, 1718. It confirmed the Treaty of Utrecht, caused the Duke of Savoy, in consideration of certain places in Italy, to exchange with the Emperor the island of Sicily for that of Sardinia; and provided that the Emperor should confer on Don Carlos the investiture of the Duchies of Parma, Placentia, and Tuscany, on the death of the present possessors without issue. The article touching the eventual succession of Don Carlos was rejected by Spain, who, under pretext of assisting the Venetians against the Turks, had taken possession of Sardinia and the greater part of Sicily. War was accordingly declared by France and England against Spain, the Spanish fleet was defeated by Byng, Sicily and Sardinia were recovered, and on January 26th, 1720, Spain acceded to the Quadruple Alliance.

raising various of his friends and adherents to the Peerage, the King, who hated his son more cordially every day, was only too glad to abandon any part of the royal power, provided by such conduct he could baffle the design of the heir-apparent. Accordingly, when the scheme was laid before him, he offered to support it with all his authority. Thus no difficulty was apprehended. The House of Lords would of course readily further the measure, since it tended to raise considerably their individual importance. In the House of Commons opposition was to be expected from the Tories, but as the Whigs, who had never ceased to declaim against the unconstitutional conduct of Lord Oxford in creating twelve peers for his own selfish ends, were in the majority, and were sure to vote for the bill, the resistance of the Tory party would be useless. An easy triumph was therefore anticipated.

The scheme of the Government was introduced by the Duke of Somerset in the House of Lords. He was supported by the Duke of Argyle and opposed by the Earl of Oxford. Whilst the proposal was being discussed Lord Stanhope came down to the House with a message from the King, to the effect that "his Majesty had so much at heart the settling the Peerage of the whole kingdom upon such foundation as may secure the freedom and constitution of Parliament in all future ages, that he is willing his Prerogative stand not in the way of so great and necessary a work." Thus encouraged, the Lords went into Committee and agreed to the following resolutions as the basis of their bill. The Peerage was not to be increased beyond six of its present number, with an exception in favour of Princes of the Blood. In cases of extinction a new creation might be asked

for. All future peerages were not to be granted for any longer tenure than to the grantee and to the heirs male of his body. And in the stead of the sixteen elective peers from Scotland, the King was to nominate twenty-five as hereditary peers, who, on the failure of heirs male, were to be supplied from the remaining Scottish aristocracy. On division, these resolutions were carried by a majority of fifty-three.

A bill framed on these principles was accordingly brought in by the Government, and debated in the Upper House. But the subject had now given rise to considerable agitation. The public were not in favour of it, the pulpits preached against it, the press flooded the country with pamphlets hostile to the ministerial scheme. It was said there would be opposition from quarters hitherto unexpected in the House of Commons. Thus warned, Stanhope, who had recently been raised to the peerage, took his place in the House of Lords on the day appointed for the third reading of the bill, and in the presence of a full chamber said, "That this bill had made a great noise and raised strange apprehensions; and since the design of it had been so misrepresented and so misunderstood that it was likely to meet with great opposition in the other House, he thought it advisable to let that matter lie still till a more proper opportunity." The bill was therefore dropped for that session—on the understanding, however, that it would be revived in the next.

But the enemies of the measure had no intention of allowing their opposition to grow cool. During the recess the subject was defended and attacked with considerable warmth. Sunderland, who was the chief author of the bill and most anxious for it to become law, used all

his arts to obtain a majority in its favour. Addison was commissioned to defend the scheme, and in a pamphlet entitled "The Old Whig" displayed his wonted literary skill in showing that the unlimited power of the Crown in the creation of peers was a comparatively modern innovation, and should be curtailed, as it tended to tamper with the independence of the House of Commons by holding out to its leaders the temptation of hereditary honours. The arguments of Addison were well refuted by Steele in the "Plebeian," who proved how the bill, if it became law, would establish a close aristocracy, and thus inflict a severe blow upon the freedom of the British Constitution. Walpole himself entered the literary lists, and gave forth to the world "The Thoughts of a Member of the Lower House in relation to a project for retaining and limiting the power of the Crown in the future creation of Peers." We need not enter into the views expressed in this pamphlet, as they were shortly afterwards reproduced in his celebrated speech. This agitation, cleverly stimulated by Whigs and Tories, by the friends of the King and the friends of the Prince, kept the subject prominently before the public; and as men's minds were much divided the opening of Parliament was looked forward to with interest.

A few days before the assembling of the Chambers a meeting was held at Devonshire House by the leading Whigs. Their opposition did not appear to be very formidable. Some, on whom the bribes and promises of Sunderland had told, were strongly in favour of the bill. Several of the peers, anxious to increase the exclusiveness of their body, also supported the proposal. Those who had no desire to advocate the policy of the Govern-

ment, but yet who felt themselves in a dilemma—how could they oppose a scheme which, when Oxford was in power, they had uniformly encouraged and advised?—favoured the measure of Sunderland. In order to escape the charge of inconsistency, the general feeling of the meeting was that the bill should pass. Walpole alone raised his voice in strong and open dissent. He said that nothing would induce him to accede to the proposal; that when it came before the House of Commons he would place it in such a light as to excite the indignation of every commoner; and that, even if he was deserted by his party, he himself would singly stand forth and combat so harsh and invidious a measure. In vain did many of the most prominent Whigs endeavour to turn him from his decision. Walpole remained immovable. Then—so commanding was his authority—we read that "the whole party, when they found that he persisted, gradually came over to his opinion and agreed that an opposition should be made to it in the House of Commons." *

On the opening of Parliament the Peerage Bill was alluded to in the speech from the Throne. "As I can truly affirm," said the King, "that no Prince was ever more zealous to increase his own authority than I am to perpetuate the liberty of my people, I hope you will think of all proper methods to establish and transmit to your posterity the freedom of our happy Constitution, and particularly to secure that part which is most liable to abuse. I value myself upon being the first who hath given you an opportunity of doing it, and I must recommend it to you to complete those measures which remained imperfect the last session." Two days

* Coxe, vol. i. p. 119.

after this insidious statement the Duke of Buckingham introduced the bill into the House of Lords, where it encountered scarcely any opposition, and passed through all its stages in less than a week. It was now sent down to the Commons.

On the side of the Government the bill was supported by Craggs, the Secretary of State, Aislabie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lechmere, the Attorney-General. The leaders of the Opposition were Steele, Sir John Packington, Methuen, and Walpole. The honours of the debate fell, however, to Walpole. His speech was a masterpiece of oratory. "It may, in fact, be doubted," says Earl Stanhope,* "if any harangue of so much eloquence and effect had ever yet been delivered in the House of Commons; whether we judge of it by the impression which we are told it produced, or by that which the records of it make upon ourselves."

Walpole began his speech with a charming illustration: "Among the Romans," said he, "the Temple of Fame was placed behind the Temple of Virtue, to denote that there was no coming to the Temple of Fame but through that of Virtue. But if this bill is passed into a law, one of the most powerful incentives to virtue would be taken away, since there would be no arriving at honour but through the winding-sheet of an old decrepit lord or the grave of an extinct noble family: a policy very different from that glorious and enlightened nation, who made it their pride to hold out to the world illustrious examples of merited elevation,

"'Patere honoris scirent ut cuncti viam.'

"It is very far from my thoughts to depreciate the

* "History of England," vol. i. p. 545.

advantages or detract from the respect due to illustrious birth; for though the philosopher may say with the poet,

> 'Et genus et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi,
> Vix ea nostra voco;'

yet the claim derived from that advantage, though fortuitous, is so generally and so justly conceded that every endeavour to subvert the principle would merit contempt and abhorrence. But though illustrious birth forms one undisputed title to pre-eminence and superior consideration, yet surely it ought not to be the only one. The origin of high titles was derived from the will of the sovereign to reward signal services or conspicuous merit by a recompense which, surviving to posterity, should display in all ages the virtues of the receiver and the gratitude of the donor. Is merit then so rarely discernible, or is gratitude so small a virtue, in our days, that the one must be supposed to be its own reward, and the other limited to a barren display of impotent good-will? Had this bill originated with some noble peer of distinguished ancestry, it would have excited less surprise; a desire to exclude others from a participation of honours is no novelty in persons of that class: *Quod ex aliorum meritis sibi arrogant, id mihi ex meis ascribi nolunt.* But it is a matter of just surprise that a bill of this nature should either have been projected or at least promoted by a gentleman* who was not long ago seated amongst us, and who, having got into the House of Peers, is now desirous to shut the door after him.

"When great alterations in the Constitution are to be made, the experiment should be tried for a short time

* Lord Stanhope.

before the proposed change is finally carried into execution, lest it should produce evil instead of good; but in this case, when the bill is once sanctioned by Parliament, there can be no future hopes of redress, because the Upper House will always oppose the repeal of an Act which has so considerably increased their power. The great unanimity with which this bill has passed the Lords ought to inspire some jealousy in the Commons; for it must be obvious that whatever the Lords gain must be acquired at the loss of the Commons, and the diminution of the regal prerogative; and that in all disputes between the Lords and Commons, when the House of Lords is immutable, the Commons must, sooner or later, be obliged to recede.

"The view of the Ministry in framing this bill is plainly nothing but to secure their power in the House of Lords. The principal argument on which the necessity of it is founded is drawn from the mischief occasioned by the creation of twelve peers during the reign of Queen Anne, for the purpose of carrying an infamous peace through the House of Lords; that was only a temporary measure, whereas the mischief to be occasioned by this bill will be perpetual. It creates thirty-one peers by authority of Parliament; so extraordinary a step cannot be supposed to be taken without some sinister design in future. The Ministry want no additional strength in the House of Lords for conducting the common affairs of Government, as is sufficiently proved by the unanimity with which they have carried through this bill. If, therefore, they think it necessary to acquire additional strength, it must be done with views and intentions more extravagant and hostile to the Constitution than any which have yet been attempted. The bill itself is of

a most insidious and artful nature. The immediate creation of nine Scotch peers, and the reservation of six English peers for a necessary occasion, is of double use; to be ready for the House of Lords if wanted, and to engage three times the number in the House of Commons by hopes and promises.

"To sanction this attempt, the King is induced to affect to waive some part of his prerogative; but this is merely an ostensible renunciation, unfounded in fact or reason. I am desirous to treat of all points relating to the private affairs of his Majesty with the utmost tenderness and caution, but I should wish to ask the House, and I think I can anticipate the answer: Has any such question been upon the *tapis*, as no man would forgive the authors, that should put them under the necessity of voting against either side?* Are there any misfortunes, which every honest man secretly laments and bewails, and would think the last of mischiefs should they ever become the subject of public and parliamentary conversations? Cannot numbers that hear me testify, from the solicitations and whispers they have met with, that there are men ready and determined to attempt these things if they had a prospect of success? If they have thought, but I hope they are mistaken in their opinion of this House, that the chief obstacle would arise in the House of Lords, where they have always been tender upon personal points, especially to any of their own body, does not this project enable them to carry any question through the House of Lords? Must not the twenty-five Scots peers accept upon any terms, or be for ever excluded? Or will not

* He here probably alluded to the misunderstanding between the King and Prince of Wales.

twenty-five be found in all Scotland that will? How great will the temptation be likewise to six English, to fill the present vacancies? And shall we then, with our eyes open, take this step, which I cannot but look upon as the beginning of woe and confusion; and shall we, under these apprehensions, break through the Union and shut up the door of Honour? It certainly will have that effect; nay, the very argument advanced in its support, that it will add weight to the Commons by keeping the rich men there, admits that it will be an exclusion.

"But we are told that his Majesty has voluntarily consented to this limitation of his prerogative. It may be true; but may not the King have been deceived? Which if it is ever to be supposed, must be admitted in this case. It is incontrovertible that kings have been overruled by the importunity of their ministers to remove, or to take into administration, persons who are disagreeable to them. The character of the King furnishes us also a strong proof that he has been deceived; for although it is a fact that in Hanover, where he possesses absolute power, he never tyrannized over his subjects or despotically exercised his authority, yet can one instance be produced when he ever gave up a prerogative?

"If the Constitution is to be amended in the House of Lords, the greatest abuses ought to be first corrected. But what is the abuse against which this bill so vehemently inveighs, and which it is intended to correct? The abuse of the prerogative in creating an occasional number of peers is a prejudice only to the Lords, it can rarely be a prejudice to the Commons, but must generally be exercised in their favour; and should it be argued that, in case of a difference between the two Houses, the King

may exercise that branch of his prerogative with a view to force the Commons to recede, we may reply that, upon a difference with the Commons, the King possesses his negative, and the exercise of that negative would be less culpable than making peers to screen himself.

"But the strongest argument against the bill is that it will not only be a discouragement to virtue and merit, but would endanger our excellent Constitution; for, as there is a due balance between the three branches of the Legislature, it will destroy that balance, and consequently subvert the whole Constitution, by causing one of the three powers, which are now dependent on each other, to preponderate in the scale. The Crown is dependent upon the Commons by the power of granting money; the Commons are dependent on the Crown by the power of dissolution: the Lords will now be made independent of both.

"The sixteen elective Scotch peers already admit themselves to be a dead court weight, yet the same sixteen are now to be made hereditary, and nine added to their number. These twenty-five, under the influence of corrupt ministers, may find their account in betraying their trust; the majority of the Lords may also find their account in supporting such ministers; but the Commons, and the Commons only, must suffer for all, and be deprived of every advantage. If the proposed measure destroys two negatives in the Crown, it gives a negative to these twenty-five united, and confers a power, superior to that of the King himself, on the head of a clan, who will have the power of recommending many. The Scotch commoners can have no other view in supporting this measure but the expected aggrandizement of their own chiefs. It will

dissolve the allegiance of the Scotch peers who are not amongst the twenty-five, and who can never hope for the benefit of an election to be Peers of Parliament, and almost enact obedience from the sovereign to the betrayers of the Constitution.

"The present view of the bill is dangerous; the view to posterity, personal and unpardonable; it will make the Lords masters of the King, according to their own confession, when they admit that a change of administration renders a new creation of peers necessary; for by precluding the King from making peers in future, it at the same time precludes him from changing the present administration, who will naturally fill the vacancies with their own creatures; and the new peers will adhere to the First Minister with the same zeal and unanimity as those created by Oxford adhered to him.

"If, when the Parliament was made septennial, the power of dissolving it before the end of seven years had been wrested from the Crown, would not such an alteration have added immense authority to the Commons? And yet the prerogative of the Crown in dissolving Parliament may be, and has been, oftener abused than the power of creating peers.

"But it may be observed that the King, for his own sake, will rarely make a great number of peers, for they, being usually created by the influence of the First Minister, soon become, upon a change of administration, a weight against the Crown; and had Queen Anne lived, the truth of this observation would have been verified in the case of most of the twelve peers made by Oxford. Let me ask, however, is the abuse of any prerogative a sufficient reason for totally annihilating that prerogative? Under that con-

sideration, the power of dissolving parliaments ought to be taken away, because that power has been more exercised and more abused than any of the other prerogatives; yet in 1641, when the King had assented to a law that disabled him from proroguing or dissolving Parliament without the consent of both Houses, he was from that time under subjection to the Parliament, and from thence followed all the subsequent mischiefs, and his own destruction. It may also be asked, whether the prerogative of making peace and war has never been abused? I might here call to your recollection the Peace of Utrecht and the present war with Spain. Yet who will presume to advise that the power of making war and peace should be taken from the Crown?

"How can the Lords expect the Commons to give their concurrence to a bill by which they and their posterity are to be for ever excluded from the peerage? How would they themselves receive a bill which should prevent a Baron from being made a Viscount, a Viscount an Earl, an Earl a Marquis, and a Marquis a Duke? Would they consent to limit the number of any rank of peerage? Certainly none; unless, perhaps, the Dukes. If the pretence for this measure is that it will tend to secure the freedom of Parliament, I say that there are many other steps more important and less equivocal, such as the discontinuance of bribes and pensions.

"That this bill will secure the liberty of Parliament I totally deny; it will secure a great preponderance to the peers; it will form them into a compact impenetrable phalanx, by giving them the power to exclude, in all cases of extinction and creation, all such persons from their body who may be obnoxious to them. In the

instances we have seen of their judgment in some late cases sufficient marks of partiality may be found to put us on our guard against committing to them the power they would derive from this bill, of judging the right of latent or dormant titles, when their verdict would be of such immense importance. If gentlemen will not be convinced by argument, at least let them not shut their ears to the dreadful example of former times; let them recollect that the overweening disposition of the Great Barons to aggrandize their own dignity occasioned them to exclude the Lesser Barons, and to that circumstance may be fairly attributed the sanguinary wars which so long desolated the country."*

The result of this speech was to inflict a severe defeat upon the Government. The bill was rejected by a majority of ninety-two.

But the opposition of Walpole was soon to end. In spite of his influence in the House of Commons and his scathing attacks upon the Government, the Ministry still held its own, and possessed both the ear of the sovereign and the confidence of the country. To Walpole, jealous of Stanhope and ambitious of power, the success of his rival must have been mortifying in the extreme. Save the Peerage Bill, every measure that Stanhope had taken in hand had been carried through most completely. Spain, after a series of sharp defeats, had acceded to the terms prescribed by the Quadruple Alliance, and Alberoni had been driven from Madrid. England and France were on the best of terms. Vienna and Holland had been reconciled. The war between Russia and Sweden was being waged with such languor that it was evident peace would

* Coxe's "Walpole," vol. i. p. 125.

soon ensue. The friends of the Pretender were to be expelled from France, and thus, thanks to the tact of Stanhope and the energies of Sunderland, not a cloud disturbed the tranquillity of the political horizon.*

Walpole therefore decided upon a course as mean and unworthy as had been his past proceedings. Since his opposition could work no hurt to the Government, he would silence his batteries and go over to the enemy. To Stanhope the return of Walpole to office, and with him the consequent adhesion of Townshend, could result in nothing but an accession of strength to the Cabinet. The renegade proposals of the quondam foe were therefore accepted, and he who had been so disparaging a critic was now to be a part of the very Government he had so recently attacked. Such is the purity and disinterestedness of political warfare! But the Member for Lynn Regis was to be taught a lesson in humility. His support was preferable to his hostility, yet it was not of so invaluable a character as to make Stanhope forgive the past or entirely forget his self-respect. Walpole, who but a few months back had been First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, was offered the post of Paymaster of the Forces without a seat in the Cabinet, and finding that no higher office would be placed at his disposal had to content himself with its acceptance. Townshend was appointed President of the Council. Such was the condition of affairs in the summer of the year 1720, when, the state of the country being quiet, the King resolved to cross over to Hanover, and, accompanied by Stanhope, found himself before the end of June comfortably settled within his palace of Herrenhausen.

* Stanhope, "History of England," vol. ii. p. 2.

Scarcely had the monarch put the sea between himself and England, when the country was convulsed by one of the most terrible failures that unhealthy speculation has ever engendered. Some few years ago the Earl of Oxford, desirous of providing for the floating debts which amounted to nearly ten millions, and of improving public credit, had put himself at the head of a financial corporation called the South Sea Company, which was to have the monopoly of trade to Spanish America. Though circumstances had prevented the entire realisation of the brilliant promises held out in the prospectus of the Lord Treasurer, still the Company was in a very flourishing condition; its schemes had been sanctioned both by Royal Charter and by an Act of Parliament, its stock was high, and so sound and influential was its position that it was deemed the rival of the Bank of England. But success is always grasping and desirous of further advantages. Towards the close of the year 1719 the South Sea Company, aware of the wish of the Ministry that all the funds should be consolidated into one, came forward with a proposal. Sir John Blunt, one of the leading directors, was the spokesman. He suggested that the Company should be permitted to buy up the irredeemable annuities granted in the two last reigns, and which now amounted to some eight hundred thousand a year, and reduce them to a redeemable state. The idea was encouraged by the Ministry, several of its members having been bribed with presents of South Sea Stock to give their consent, and the question came before Parliament.

Aislabie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced the subject in the House of Commons, and declared that, if the proposal of the South Sea Company was accepted, the National Debt would be liquidated in twenty-six years. A

rather stormy debate ensued, the question arising whether it was fair to other financial companies to accept the terms of the South Sea Company and not put the matter up to competition. The House divided, and the question of competition was carried by a large majority. The Bank of England now entered the lists against its younger rival, but the South Sea Company had resolved, no matter at what cost, to outbid Threadneedle Street, and after a feverish competition the ruinous offer of seven millions and a half was accepted by the Government from the South Sea directors.

In the progress of the South Sea Bill through the House of Commons, Walpole, who with his usual clear-headedness perceived how the offer of such high terms must inevitably lead the Company into the rashest speculation in order to get its money back, opposed the project with all his influence. "In vain," writes Coxe,* "in vain he displayed the fallacy of the South Sea scheme, and the great difference between that and the Bank, by showing that the Company was not limited in the price they were to put on the stock made over to them; whereas the Bank offered a specific sum of seventeen hundred pounds stock for every hundred pounds in the Long Annuities, and the same proportion for the Short Annuities. In vain he urged that it countenanced the pernicious practice of stock-jobbing, by diverting the genius of the nation from trade and industry; that it held out a dangerous lure for decoying the unwary to their ruin by a false prospect of gain, and to part with the gradual profits of their labour for imaginary wealth. In vain he insisted that, if the proposal of the South Sea Company should be accepted, the rise of their stock ought to be limited. In vain he dwelt

* "Memoirs," vol. i. p. 130.

on the miseries and confusion which then prevailed in France, from the adoption of similar measures. In vain he argued that, as the whole success of the scheme must chiefly depend on the rise of the stock, the great principle of the project was an evil of the first magnitude—it was to raise artificially the value of the stock, by exciting and keeping up a general infatuation, and by promising dividends out of funds which would not be adequate to the purpose. In vain he predicted that, if the establishment succeeded, the directors would become masters of the Government, form an absolute aristocracy in the kingdom, and control the resolutions of the Legislature; or if it did not succeed, the failure would cause a general discontent."

His warning words, however, fell on idle ears, and the South Sea Bill became law. In spite of the terms they had offered, the directors of the South Sea Company had at first no reason to repent of their boldness. Aware that they could not fulfil their engagements with the Government, and pay the enormous sum of seven millions and a half, without availing themselves of the credulity of the public, the directors, the better to rig the market, issued all kinds of reports calculated to impose upon the greedy and avaricious. Gibraltar and Port Mahon were to be exchanged for valuable mining districts in Peru. Priceless treasures were hidden along the coasts of Spanish America. The South Sea trade was the only certain road to wealth. Enormous dividends would be paid. The South Sea Company were masters of the situation, for, by monopolizing the fund of the whole National Debt, Government would be compelled to apply to them for loans, which would be advanced on their own terms. These and similar rumours were actively circulated and found thousands of

credulous listeners. A subscription of one million was proposed, which was so eagerly taken up by the public that two millions were immediately forthcoming. A second subscription was opened and was instantly covered. Then followed two other subscriptions, which met with the same success as their predecessors. The directors, in the intoxication of their prosperity, now passed a resolution declaring their next yearly dividend should not be less than fifty per cent. The stocks rose from one hundred and thirty to a thousand.

For the next few months speculation-mania was at its height. Change Alley was thronged with eager bidders for South Sea allotments. The offices of the Company, greatly enlarged though they had been, were yet too small to hold the crowd of purchasers, and it was found necessary to place tables and desks in the streets and neighbouring courts for the clerks to transact the business. "It is impossible to tell you," writes Secretary Scraggs to Earl Stanhope, "what a rage prevails here for South Sea subscriptions at any price. The crowd of those that possess the redeemable annuities is so great that the Bank, who are obliged to take them in, has been forced to set tables with clerks in the streets." In this frantic race for wealth all had started. Here was a stanch old Tory struggling with some St. Germain's intriguer to approach a courted clerk in order to obtain his coupons. There was a stout Protestant divine edging himself between a disguised Jesuit priest and a dame of easy virtue, on whose shoulders might yet be seen the scars of her last flogging in Bridewell cells, and crying out that Mr. Clerk might put his name down for three shares. Now it was a lady of the highest fashion imploring some

young apprentice, who fiercely clutched the guineas he had saved from his wages or had embezzled from the till, to let her take his place and be a few steps nearer the desk. In that greedy gathering birth forgot its pride, sex its prudery, and polities its prejudices. Elbowing each other towards the chambers in Change Alley, or towards the tables set up in the streets, were to be seen Whig and Tory, Protestant and Papist, soldier and civilian, the haughty lady from Soho and her painted sister from Whitefriars, the dandies of the coffee-houses and the cut-throats from Wapping, the statesman from his family town-house in the Strand and the scribe from his attic in Grub Street—in short, every representative of Society, from the lord to his valet, from the mistress to her maid, were to be found within a few yards of the offices of the South Sea Company absorbed in the one frenzy of gambling in its shares.

But the bubble soon burst. The success of the South Sea scheme had caused numerous other companies to be formed, the subscription lists of which were quickly taken up by the deluded public, and for a time it seemed as if the nation had at last discovered a royal road to wealth. Then the end came. Company after company, which had been paying a dividend out of its capital, and then completed its operations by gambling away its entire capital, had to declare itself insolvent, and submit to the infuriated reproaches of its shareholders. A spirit of distrust succeeded to the unlimited confidence that had been reposed in unscrupulous directors, and people were beginning to ask themselves whether they had been prudent in investing their all in the South Sea scheme. A rush was made upon the Company's offices by a nervous crowd, anxious

to convert their once much-coveted bonds into money, only to find how bitterly they had been deluded. In less than one month the stock had fallen below three hundred.

There was no money, and the vaunted paper coupons were worthless. The grossest fraud had been perpetrated. It was found that over half a million of fictitious stock had been created in order that the profit upon that sum might be disposed of by the directors to further the passing of the bill through Parliament. The favourites of the King had been bribed with stock. Many of the ministers had been bribed with stock. Several of the leading officials in the Government departments had been in the pay of the Company. But such people, with commendable prudence, had taken advantage of the credulity of the country and sold out when the market was at the flood, thus realising immense profits. It was the middle class and those not behind the scenes who were the chief sufferers; these held on to their highly priced stock to the last only to find that the Company had been circulating an enormous amount of paper with no assets to redeem their promises to pay. "From the very beginning," writes Thomas Brodrick to Lord Chancellor Middleton,* "I founded my judgment of the whole affair upon this unquestionable maxim, that ten millions (which is more than our running cash) would not circulate two hundred millions beyond which our paper credit extended; that therefore, when ever that should become doubtful, be the cause what it would, our noble state machine must inevitably fall to the ground, or at best be brought within so much a narrower compass than

* "Walpole Correspondence," September 27, 1720. Coxe.

what was projected, that our most sanguine people would find nothing more appositely expressive of their vain hopes than

"Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus."

The ruin was universal; the goldsmiths and bankers who had lent large sums upon the stock were obliged to stop payment and abscond; wealthy people found their resources terribly crippled, the middle classes were reduced to beggary; whilst trade in all its branches was paralyzed. Never in the history of commerce was a nation so easily deluded by a scheme so hollow.

It was felt that, if the country could be saved from a financial collapse, there was only one man capable of restoring public credit. Walpole, during this great excitement, was quietly amusing himself at Houghton in fitting up his galleries with pictures and improving his grounds. Though he had expressed his disapproval of the South Sea scheme, he yet saw no reason why he should not avail himself of the folly of his countrymen. Accordingly he had bought stock when it was at a minimum price, and had sold it when it had touched its maximum of one thousand. "I am fully satisfied," said he quietly, when a friend remonstrated with him for selling out.

He was now summoned to London to undertake the arduous task of calming the tempest and arranging chaos. "Everybody longs for you in town," writes the Under-Secretary at War,* "having no hopes from any but yourself, though I must own I don't see what effectual help can be given to them till some time has worn off people's fears and distrusts of one another. . . . They all

* "Orford Papers," October, 1720. Coxe.

cry out for you to help them, so that when you come you will have more difficulties on you than ever you had. For though you are perfectly clear of this sad scheme, yet you will be prodigiously importuned by all the sufferers to do more than any man can do, and more than you, in your judgment, would think ought to be done if it could be done."

The first move of Walpole was to induce the Bank of England to support the credit of the South Sea Company by subscribing into the stock of the Company, valued at four hundred per cent., three millions five hundred thousand pounds, to be repaid the next year; but the Bank shortly afterwards, still seeing the South Sea stock in a depressed state, became fearful of its bargain and renounced the agreement. At the same time the efforts of Walpole were greatly hampered by the desire of the enraged shareholders to revenge themselves upon the directors and upon those of the Ministry who had sanctioned the scheme. On all sides the cry for vengeance was raised, for no one is more bitter and implacable than the amateur speculator who has been tempted to invest and has been unsuccessful; it is the company that is always blamed, but never the want of prudence and common sense in the investor. The South Sea directors, who but a few months before had been courted and fêted by the highest in the land, were now called "the scum of the people" and "miscreants." One member rose up in the House, stigmatizing the directors as "the parricides of their country," and proposed that they should be sewn up in sacks and cast into the river.

With more judgment and discretion Walpole entered upon his duties. He knew that Sunderland was his enemy,

and that he had chiefly advocated the South Sea scheme in order to secure a majority in Parliament by presents of its stock, but among the faults of Walpole personal vindictiveness had little place, and he declined to avail himself of his present opportunity to gratify a private revenge. In reply to the cries for vengeance he said that it was unwise "to begin the session with irritating inquiries before they examined the cause; that, if the city of London was on fire, all wise men would rush forwards to extinguish the flames, and prevent the spreading of the conflagration, before they inquired who were the incendiaries. In like manner, public credit having received a most dangerous wound, and being still in a bleeding condition, they ought to apply a speedy remedy, and afterwards they might inquire into the cause of the calamity. For my part," he continued, "I never approved the South Sea scheme, and am sensible it has done a great deal of mischief, but, since it cannot be undone, it is the duty of all good men to assist in retrieving it; with this view I have already bestowed some thoughts on a proposal to restore public credit, which, in a proper time, I will submit to the wisdom of Parliament." *

This proposal was soon laid before the House, and contained the following suggestions: The public contracts with the South Sea Company were to be preserved inviolate; nine millions of stock were to be engrafted into the Bank of England; the same sum, on certain conditions, was to be engrafted into the East India Company; whilst twenty millions were to be left to the South Sea. After no little opposition this scheme passed through Parliament; it was, however, shortly afterwards improved

* Coxe, vol. i. p. 140.

upon by Walpole, or rather superseded by a new bill, which was cordially approved of by the Legislature. "This bill," writes Coxe, "arranged the affairs of the South Sea Company in such a manner that five millions of the seven which the directors had agreed to pay the public were remitted. The incumbrances were partly discharged from the confiscation of the forfeited estates, the credit of their bonds maintained, £33 6*s.* 8*d.* per cent. were divided among the proprietors, the Company was soon in a situation to fulfil its engagements with the public, and two millions were reserved towards the liquidation of the national debt. But the proprietors made such loud and repeated complaints on the hardship of depriving them of these two millions that the Parliament afterwards remitted that sum, which made an addition of £6 5*s.* per cent."

Whilst public credit was thus being restored, the projectors of the calamity were receiving terrible punishment. The directors of the South Sea Company, on account of their fraudulent conduct in rigging the market, were disabled from ever holding any place or sitting in Parliament, whilst their estates, amounting to above two millions sterling, were confiscated for the relief of the South Sea sufferers. Sunderland was compelled to resign, and Walpole succeeded him as First Lord of the Treasury. Stanhope, whilst vindicating his conduct, was seized with a rush of blood to the head and died the next day. Townshend was appointed in his stead as Secretary of State. Aislabie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had introduced the South Sea scheme to the House of Commons, was committed to the Tower and his property seized. Craggs, the second Secretary of State, died of the small-pox whilst the inquiry into his conduct was pending.

All the minor offenders were treated with the same rigour as their superiors. Culpable as were the proceedings of those engaged in the fraud of the South Sea, it is doubtful whether in several instances the punishment inflicted did not outweigh the guilt of the offence.

Nor did he who, by his tact and wisdom, had restored confidence to the country and saved its finances from a general wreck escape harmless. The malice which always spies upon the actions of a successful statesman was now to wing its envenomed shafts against Walpole. It was said that his conduct in arranging the affairs of the South Sea Company had been false and interested. He was accused of having defended Sunderland and the directors from the most mercenary motives, and that both the ministers and the Company had handsomely rewarded him for his services. When this frivolous and ungenerous charge had been completely refuted—chiefly from the very correspondence of his accusers—scandal drew another shaft from her well-filled quiver. The report was circulated that the minister had been in league with the governor of the Bank of England, and had, in order to make private profit, fraudulently proposed the Bank contract, but that, when his own purpose had been served, he had released the Bank from its agreement. This accusation also could not be sustained, for it was shown that the Bank contract had been drawn up in the midst of great alarm and depression, and at the express wish of the Ministry and the South Sea directors, and that therefore there could have been no collusion between Walpole and the Bank. Nor was he to be blamed because the governors of the Bank withdrew from their agreement, for it was proved that the Bank of England had been most reluctant to enter into the trans-

action from the first, and that, had it not reconsidered its decision, it would have been involved in equal ruin with the South Sea Company.

But to show the vexatious character of these accusations we need only comment upon the two chief charges. It was stated that when Walpole had advised the Bank contract being entered into, he had, in the terms of the contract, greatly favoured the Bank in preference to the South Sea Company, so that he might sell out the money he had in the Bank at an advanced price. When this charge was openly made against him, Walpole publicly declared in the House of Commons that at that very time, so far from having any money in the Bank, he still held some stock in the South Sea Company, and that if his enemies wished to accuse him of interested motives, they ought to have said that, instead of favouring the Bank, he had favoured the South Sea Company. Nor was it long before the spite of political hate actually took him at his word, and *reversed the accusation!* Walpole was now gravely charged with having, when he drew up the contract, favoured the South Sea Company in preference to the Bank, in order that he might sell the South Sea stock he held at a profit! Is it possible for malice and audacity to descend lower?

Still, vicious and contradictory as were these accusations, they tended not a little to embitter the peace of the minister, and to cause him, even when the scheme of the South Sea Company was almost forgotten, to be continually on the defensive.

CHAPTER VI.

PILOT OF THE REALM. 1720—1727.

On taking his place as head of the Treasury, Walpole at once proceeded to examine into the state of the expenditure of the realm. A brief survey was sufficient to show him the urgent necessity of reform. Harsh duties and irritating restrictions at that time greatly crippled the prosperity of our foreign trade. Valuable goods made at home, and for which there was a strong demand abroad, were not permitted to quit the country without first paying heavy taxes to the Custom House officers, whilst the people were deprived of many articles both of food and clothing, which could have been imported to our shores at a cheap rate, on account of the crushing taxation imposed upon their entrance. Walpole now resolved to do for the country what he had already done for the South Sea bondholders. He proposed the abolition of many of the heavier duties upon our external and internal commerce, and was the first among our statesmen to introduce the thin end of the wedge of Free Trade.

The subject was laid before the country in the speech from the throne drawn up by Walpole at the opening of Parliament. After congratulating the Houses on the peaceful attitude of Europe, the King thus proceeded: "In this situation of affairs, we should be extremely

wanting to ourselves if we neglected to improve the favourable opportunity which this general tranquillity gives us of extending our commerce, upon which the riches and grandeur of this nation chiefly depend. It is very obvious that nothing would more conduce to the obtaining so public a good, than to make the exportation of our own manufactures, and the importation of the commodities used in the manufacturing of them, as practicable and as easy as may be; by this means the balance of trade may be preserved in our favour, our navigation increased, and greater numbers of our poor employed. I must therefore recommend it to you, gentlemen of the House of Commons, to consider how far the duties upon these branches may be taken off, and replaced, without any violation of public faith, or laying any new burthen upon my people. And I promise myself, that by a due consideration of this matter, the produce of those duties, compared with the infinite advantages that will accrue to the kingdom by their being taken off, will be found so inconsiderable as to leave little room for any difficulties or objections."

The result of this suggestion was that one hundred and six articles of British manufacture were permitted to leave the country duty free, whilst the same privilege was accorded to the importation of thirty-eight articles of raw material. A second valuable commercial reform was also at the same time introduced. It had been the custom of the Admiralty, for the benefit of certain monopolies, notably the Russia Company, to draw its naval stores from the Baltic. The consequence of this practice was not only that the country paid almost double for every naval article she required, but that she was entirely at the mercy of Russia, who could prohibit the export of such

supplies at any moment. Walpole saw, if this condition of things was maintained, how critical would be the position of the English navy should war ever break out between Great Britain and Russia. Accordingly he introduced a bill that all naval stores should be obtained from our plantations in North America, which abounded in materials necessary for the equipment of a fleet, and, to encourage this new policy, offered to grant bounties and premiums to such across the Atlantic as would undertake to provide the requisite articles. "I am persuaded," writes Tucker in his "Theory of Commerce," after describing the great benefit that ensued from these measures, "that impartial posterity will acknowledge that, if ever a statesman deserved well of the public, Sir Robert Walpole was this man."*

But posterity, in its remembrance of statesmen who, though great and wise in the main, have yet left behind them a reputation not unsullied by some mixture of evil, is too apt to fix its regard on the evil instead of the good, on the shade to the exclusion of the light. Sir Robert Walpole has been handed down by history as the great Minister of Corruption, who kept his majorities in the House of Commons by the lavish distribution of Treasury gold, and whose simple creed was that every man has his price. We forget in his vices the virtues of the minister under whom England enjoyed the blessings of peace as she had never enjoyed them since the days of James I., who was the first to place our system of finance on a sound footing, and who, unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries in power, was never bloodthirsty in his revenge.

"Men's evil manners live in brass; their virtues
We write in water."

* Coxe, p. 164.

For the moment Walpole's schemes of domestic reform were interrupted by an event which might have resulted in the most serious consequences.

The hopes of the Jacobites both at home and abroad had been greatly excited by the news from Rome, that the wife of the Pretender had been delivered of a son—afterwards the unfortunate Prince Charles. "It is the most acceptable news which can reach the ears of a good Englishman," writes Bishop Atterbury, an ambitious prelate and head of the Jacobite Junta in England, which was ever intriguing for the restoration of the Stuarts. The occasion was considered an excellent one to revive an interest in the exiled family. Recent events had also tended to make the adherents of the old line somewhat sanguine. The South Sea scheme and its failure had been attributed in a great measure to the German mistresses of the King; the feud between the sovereign and the Prince of Wales, which, though recently compromised by a forced reconciliation, still existed in all its bitterness, was branded by the Jacobites as likely to be most disastrous to the country; the King was constantly crossing over to Hanover, and it was evident that his new empire was distasteful to him. It was now suggested in pamphlets, and talked about in the coffee-houses, that this state of things might easily be altered. In his palace of the Holy Apostles at Rome was the true King of England, an Englishman in tastes and feelings, who was ready to pardon his rebellious subjects, provided they would loyally turn towards him and aid him to ascend the throne of his ancestors. A son had been born him—what better opportunity could there be for a repentant people to admit the errors of their ways than the present? They had now

learned at what a cost they had effected the exchange from the House of Stuart to the House of Hanover. All they had gained was a foreigner as their King who did not speak their language and disliked their customs; foreign women of low morals interfering in the affairs of state; foreigners usurping English titles at court, and enriching themselves with English money; continental wars for the interests of a petty province, of which they knew nothing and cared less. Let them acquire wisdom from the past, and make England the England she was of old, and not an island, full of wealth and resources, for the convenience of a German princeling, and to minister to German ambition. With the recall of the true Royal Family, English interests would be once more dominant in the State, and the future welfare of the country assured. So certain people talked, and James in the seclusion of his asylum, within the shadow of the Vatican, really believed that the nation was with him, and that his restoration to the throne was at hand.

An active correspondence now ensued between the Pretender and his adherents in England, headed by Atterbury. The great object of the party was to obtain a foreign force either from Spain or France for the invasion of England. The King was to visit Hanover in the summer. Immediately on his departure, the foreign legion was to land in Sussex, accompanied by the inspiring presence of James. At once the head of the Stuarts was to be proclaimed king throughout the country. The Tower was to be seized, and the bullion in the Bank and Exchequer was to defray the expenses of the cause. These measures carried out, it was confidently expected that the nation, groaning under Hanoverian misrule, would unanimously declare for the old line. Unfortunately, however, for the Jacobites,

this very practicable scheme was soon discovered, and the conspirators brought to trial.

Walpole took a prominent part in the prosecutions that ensued. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended for a year at his instigation. A select committee was appointed to inquire into the plot. The evidence against Atterbury was overwhelming, and sentence of exile was passed upon him. Imprisonment, confiscation of property, or beheading, according to the extent of guilt, became the fate of the remainder of this misguided band which had essayed to depose a reigning monarch.

Aware that certain Papists and Non-jurors were at the root of every attempt against the House of Hanover, Walpole now resolved to make the innocent suffer for the guilty. He introduced a bill to raise one hundred thousand pounds by taxing the estates of all Roman Catholics and Non-jurors. The measure was opposed by several members of the House of Commons who, though loyal to the throne, strongly objected to persecution on account of religious opinions. Walpole, in defence of his scheme, represented "the great dangers incurred by this nation since the Reformation, from the constant endeavours of Papists to subvert our happy constitution and the Protestant religion by the most cruel, violent, and unjustifiable methods; that he would not take upon him to charge any particular person among them with being concerned in this horrid conspiracy. That it was notorious that many of them had been engaged in the Preston rebellion, and some were executed for it; and the present plot was contrived at Rome, and countenanced in popish countries; that many of the Papists were not only well-wishers to it, but had contributed large sums for so nefarious a purpose, and therefore he thought it but reasonable they

should bear an extraordinary share of the expenses to which they had subjected the nation."

Shortly before Christmas the bill became law. It is impossible to acquit Walpole, in the introduction of this harsh and invidious measure, of the charge of intolerance. That men should be made to suffer for the profession of religious opinions, unless dangerous to the State, is tyranny of the cruellest and most irritating kind. Such policy, instead of suppressing a creed, all the more increases the devotion of its adherents, and keeps alive, through the spirit of martyrdom, much which would die out under a wise and judicious system of toleration. That an innocent majority should be made to bear the sins of a guilty minority is contrary to all ideas of justice. Walpole said truly when he advised the imposition of this tax, that the Rebellion of '15 and the Atterbury plot were due to the intrigues of Roman Catholics and Non-jurors. But he knew perfectly well who were the Papists and the disaffected, who were always hanging about the antechambers of Versailles and Madrid, sowing discord and suggesting treason. The last actions of the Jacobites had plainly shown that as a party they were in England weak and lukewarm. The majority of the English Roman Catholics, though they professed no affection for the House of Hanover, were yet quite content to give the new dynasty a fair trial, and, provided their religious scruples were respected, to live in peace with the existing Government. Both of the Jacobite insurrections prove that in England at least the followers of the Pretender were few in number and feeble in action. From the Rebellion of 1715, and from the Rebellion of 1745, eliminate the Scotch adherents, the Irish adventurers, and the French volunteers, and how few

Englishmen of birth and fortune took up arms in the cause of the White Cockade? In 1715, when the rebels made their appearance in the northern counties, hardly a squire or yeoman swelled their ranks. And when in the affair of 1745 Prince Charles had marched to Derby, save a few volunteers from Manchester, not an Englishman, Protestant or Papist, enlisted himself under his banner. Thus in identifying the English Roman Catholics *en masse* with the Jacobite insurgents, and making their lands smart for a union that did not exist, Walpole committed not only an act of unstatesmanlike intolerance, but passed a gratuitous and unfounded stigma upon an upright, honourable, and passively patriotic party. He knew that the leaders of the Jacobites were the chieftains of a few dissatisfied clans in the Highlands of Scotland, a few English peers, and the penniless Irish at Paris, who would have drawn their swords for anybody or any cause, provided their empty pockets could have been filled with gold. Instead of levying a tax upon the whole of the English Roman Catholics, had Walpole contented himself with taxing or even confiscating the property of those only who were really guilty of the crime of plotting against the throne, it would have been more in accordance with his usual sense of mercy and discretion. Had he made the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Arran, the Earl of Orrery, Lord North, Lord Gower, and the other intriguers pay heavily for their disaffection he would have punished the true criminals and escaped the charge of an unworthy oppression.*

For his services to the country, and for the jealous manner in which he guarded the interests of the Crown,

* Coxe defends Walpole in this matter.

Walpole was now to receive his reward. The King had long wished to raise his faithful minister to the Upper House, but the honour had been invariably declined. This refusal at first appears extraordinary. The birth of Walpole fully justified him in accepting a peerage, his fortune was ample, and the House of Lords was in those days not only the most dignified, but the most important of the two chambers of the Legislature. The Revolution of 1688 had placed the control of the government in the hands of the chief county families, and the influence of the peerage was enormous. The peers were all-powerful at Court; they held the chief offices in the State; and, thanks to close boroughs and nomination boroughs, they could through their nominees often turn the scale in the divisions of the Lower House. When a commoner had done distinguished service, as had been the case with Stanhope, he was rewarded with a coronet. In every Ministry that was formed the peers preponderated. Walpole was the first chief of a Cabinet who did not possess a seat in the Upper House. Even at the present day, in spite of the two Reform Bills, we can almost count on one hand the administrations since the Revolution that have been led by a commoner.

Why, then, did Walpole refuse an honour which it was the custom of his predecessors to accept, and which would have to all appearances strengthened his position in the country? The answer is easily found. In spite of the influence exercised by the great governing families, Walpole was not slow to perceive the growing power of the House of Commons. The mere fact alone that the second chamber was the guardian of the public purse, and possessed as its special prerogative the right of instituting money bills, was

sufficient in itself to make Walpole, so long as he remained in power, prefer the green benches of the one to the red benches of the other. In the House of Commons Walpole was absolute. He could maintain or defeat a policy by his eloquence; he could obtain what money he required; he was popular in the chamber; its busy practical life suited him; no rival worthy of his steel had as yet appeared; and whenever he encountered opposition, his exquisite tact knew how to crush it openly by argument, or tamper with it secretly by bribery. In the art of manipulating majorities he was a consummate master. He lived in a time when a gentleman thought no more of selling his vote than he now does of selling his game or his fruit. And the opportunities for corruption were enormous. The House of Commons ever since the Revolution of 1688 had been developing its strength and power till shrewd politicians like Walpole saw that the day was not far distant when the Lower House would be supreme in the State. Already ministers were responsible to it for their actions; its votes maintained the army and the navy; it criticized every measure sanctioned by the Government. And yet, whilst exercising this authority, the House of Commons was virtually an irresponsible assembly. At the present day a member of Parliament is responsible to the country, and the observed of all observers. His speeches are published; his votes are publicly recorded in the division lists; he may betray his constituents, but his treachery is no sooner committed than it is discovered. But in the days of Walpole the working of the House of Commons was wrapped in mystery. There were no newspapers to give an account of the speeches that had been delivered; the

division lists were unpublished; beyond the elasticity of the human conscience no restraint interfered with the action of a member of Parliament. The consequence was that there existed a large population of hireling politicians in the House of Commons who had embraced the profession of politics solely to make pecuniary capital. They sold their votes to the highest bidder, and were ready, provided the guineas of the Treasury were forthcoming, to support or oppose as was required of them. This venal band Walpole well knew how to maintain. As head of the Treasury it was easy for him to obtain their adherence, to command their loyalty, and to make them rally round him when a doubtful measure had to be passed or a strong opposition to be encountered. He was wise in remaining in the House of Commons. In the House of Lords he would be a new comer, his authority overshadowed by that of great names, and he would be excluded from dealing with the subject he most liked—Finance. For these reasons he declined a peerage for himself, but accepted it for his eldest son, Robert, who was created Baron Walpole, of Walpole, in the county of Norfolk. The wording of the patent shows how high was the appreciation of the King for his minister:

"Our most beloved and most faithful counsellor Robert Walpole, First Commissioner of the Treasury, with the assistance of other select persons, and Chancellor of our Exchequer, having highly recommended himself to our royal favour, by his many services to us, to our House, and to his own country, we did not think him unworthy to be advanced to the rank of the Peers of this realm; but though he rather chooses to merit the highest titles than to wear them, we have, however, thought fit, in order

to ennoble his family, to confer upon the son the honour due to the father, and to raise to the peerage Robert Walpole, junior, Esquire," &c.

It was natural that the paramount authority of Walpole should give rise to much secret jealousy among those who were anxious for the favour of the King. As Sunderland and Stanhope had intrigued against the power of Townshend and Walpole in the late Ministry, so now the same tactics were pursued in the present Cabinet by one of the ablest men of his time. On the death of Scraggs, the late Secretary of State, the seals were conferred upon Lord Carteret, who had been the friend of Stanhope, and who, under his auspices, had been appointed Ambassador to Sweden. A brilliant classic, an accomplished linguist, a powerful orator, Lord Carteret used all his arts to ingratiate himself with his sovereign. He soon succeeded. He was the only English minister who could speak German, and this fact alone was sufficient to establish cordiality between the King and himself. But Carteret was not only the accomplished scholar and the astute statesman —he was a keen man of pleasure, fond of wine, fond of women, and an excellent *raconteur*. The monarch and his minions were charmed with the new Secretary of State, who was always agreeable, always amusing, and, like Godolphin, never in the way and never out of it.

Conscious of the influence he possessed with the King, Carteret now determined to make a party for himself, and oust his colleagues from office. It was the fate of all cabinets in the earlier part of the eighteenth century to be torn by internal divisions. Carteret had no difficulty, as Stanhope and Sunderland had had no difficulty, in obtaining a following. By his wit and his promises he gained

over to his side the Countess of Darlington, one of the mistresses of the King, and her sister, Madame de Platen. He next secured the adherence of Lord Carleton, the Privy Seal, the Duke of Roxburgh, the Secretary for Scotland, and Lord Cadogan, the Commander-in-Chief. Thus supported, Carteret began to show his hand. He approved of the German policy instituted by the King, and took a deep interest in the affairs of Hanover. He professed to exercise considerable influence over the mind of Cardinal Dubois, the Minister of France, and endeavoured to let the King perceive that, if there was one man in his Cabinet who could be of service in cementing a strong alliance between the Courts of Versailles and St. James's, it was the Secretary for the Southern Department. He sneered at Townshend and disparaged the abilities of Walpole. In all his suggestions and insinuations he was assisted by the adherence of the Countess of Darlington and Madame de Platen.

These underhand intrigues did not, however, escape the watchful eyes of either Townshend or Walpole. Not a move was made by Carteret but was mated by the brother ministers. Carteret had ingratiated himself with Lady Darlington and Madame de Platen. Townshend had secured the good offices of the Duchess of Kendal, the favourite mistress of the King; in one of his letters she is "the good Duchess and their fast friend." In those days men of birth and honour, nay, even pillars of the Church, thought it neither derogatory to their rank nor repulsive to their sense of probity to pay court to a royal mistress in order to attain the ends they had in view. Carteret supported the King's German measures and furthered the policy of Bernstorf and Bothmar. Townshend

satisfactorily proved to his master how unwise such policy was, and, aided by his "fast friend," procured the disgrace of Bernstorf. Carteret had advised that strong measures should be taken by Hanover against Russia, who was desirous of attacking Sweden; Townshend, on the other hand, warmly opposed such suggestions, and said that if they were adopted England would be involved in a war with the Czar. The warning of Townshend was attended to, and the triumphant Secretary wrote to Walpole that the King had declined to sign any paper relating to British affairs, save in his, Townshend's, presence. When the sovereign wanted money, Walpole, supreme in the Commons, never turned a deaf ear to the request, till George in a fit of enthusiasm cried out that "his good Walpole" could create gold out of nothing, and that he never had his equal in business.

The struggle for supremacy, therefore, stood thus: Carteret was the clever agreeable minister, the confidential friend, who never dissented from his master's opinions, and who was always willing to carry out the royal policy; yet the King could not help finding that when the reasons of Carteret were pitted against the arguments of Townshend, the latter were always the more convincing, and were always finally adopted; added to this was the important fact that Walpole easily obtained all parliamentary supplies that were required, and that he possessed an authority in the House of Commons and in the City to which Carteret could never attain. Shallow courtiers, who saw how pleased George was in the society of Carteret, how long and confidential were their conversations, predicted that the brother ministers would soon have to give place to their brilliant rival; but

politicians and far-seeing men, who knew how the counsels of Townshend and Walpole carried the day, felt that the division in the Cabinet would soon be healed and Carteret be forced to retire. Carteret was the friend of the Crown, but Townshend and Walpole were its advisers.

The contest between the two was soon to be decided. The greater part of these intrigues and counter-intrigues had taken place on the Continent. The King had crossed over to Hanover early in the summer of 1723, and though it was unusual for the two Secretaries of State to accompany him, yet, as Carteret's society was so pleasing to the sovereign as to be indispensable, and as Townshend had no intention of allowing his plotting colleague to have the field entirely to himself, both ministers found themselves lodged at Herrenhausen, whilst Walpole remained at home acting as sole Secretary of State in addition to his other duties.

In the frequent correspondence that ensued between the brothers it is amusing to read the remarks that Townshend passes upon his colleague, and how he chuckles over Carteret's defeats. "I am sorry," he writes to Walpole,* "the false and vain accounts which our friend [Carteret] thinks proper to send over of his superior interest at this place should make the least impression on any one, or have given you a moment's uneasiness. . . . I can assure you that nothing has passed here that can, without the greatest falsehood, be wrested to give the least countenance to any such opinion."

When Baron Sparre, the Swedish Ambassador at Hanover, endeavoured to procure the assistance of the Electorate against the designs of Russia, Townshend took the

* "Hardwicke Papers," July 28, 1723. Coxe.

contrary view of the matter to Bernstorf and Carteret, who were in favour of a pecuniary aid being granted to Sweden. "I must acquaint you," writes Townshend triumphantly to Walpole,* "with a struggle I have had here with M. Bernstorf and Lord Carteret, which has ended as well as could be wished. . . . I could not think it for our master's service to advise him to an expense, neither justifiable by our treaties nor of any service towards averting the present danger, and which might have opened the way for repeated applications of the same nature. . . . As soon as Bernstorf came out, Carteret and I went in to the King together, where the point was fairly battled, and I had the satisfaction to find the King entirely agree with me in opinion, and for the same reasons, to the no small mortification of my antagonist. . . . I have the satisfaction to assure you that as I never saw the King in righter dispositions, even in relation to those interests towards which he may naturally be supposed somewhat partial, so I never at any time, since I had the honour to serve him, was used with half the confidence and visible marks of distinction that I have met with since my being here. . . . The King continues his resolution of signing no paper relating to his British affairs but in my presence. . . .

"My brother Carteret set out with making his court to Bernstorf, Countess Platen, and Madame de Wendt, an old friend of Lord Sunderland, who is supposed to govern the Countess, and I suppose he hoped to make use of Schrader, Plessen, and such like emissaries and intelligencers, brought up to lying and intrigue. I make it my chief business to pay my court to our master; and to

* "Hardwicke Papers," no date. Coxe.

preserve the confidence of our old friends, taking care at the same time to show all the civilities I safely can to the others. I see no reason hitherto to repent of the interest I have made choice of, though my brother secretary, I believe, does, if I may judge by the countenance of his friends, and by his behaviour to me, which grows more supple than it was at first. As for Bernstorf, his own creatures acknowledge that he has less credit with the King than ever. If there be a place in the world where faction and intrigue are natural and in fashion, it is here, which makes it no easy task for a stranger to behave himself inoffensively: however, I am very sure I have lost no friend, and I think I have made no enemy; though it is not a very agreeable situation to be eternally upon one's guard from all quarters."

"My colleague," he writes some time later, "is gone out a-shooting for some days; he seems to be pretty much at the stand what course to steer next, having no great reason hitherto to be satisfied with his negotiations." On the death of Sir William Strickland the post of Commissary became vacant. Walpole had recommended one Wescomb for the vacancy, Lord Carteret a man called Burroughs. The claims of the rival candidates came before the King. Much to Townshend's satisfaction, who had vigorously supported Walpole's nomination, Wescomb was appointed. "Perhaps you may have some curiosity to know," he writes to his brother-in-law, "what my good colleague's behaviour was upon this victory. We came home very lovingly together, and he was lavish on his old topic, how well he intended to live with you and me. I beg that these particulars may not be mentioned to anybody but the Duke of Newcastle; since nothing would give his

Majesty greater offence than our making any such affair a matter of triumph; and the less we boast, the more we shall certainly have to boast of."

This prediction was soon to be realised. The condition of affairs on the Continent rendered it most desirable that a cordial alliance should be maintained between England and France. The English minister in Paris was one Sir Luke Schaub, a Swiss by birth, who, having been Stanhope's confidential secretary, had been rapidly advanced in the diplomatic service. Between Carteret and Sir Luke there was a complete understanding; Sir Luke, as became one who had been indebted to Stanhope, hated the Townshend-Walpole administration, and was only too willing to further the schemes of Carteret in his struggle for political supremacy. At this time a marriage had been arranged between a daughter of Madame de Platen and the Count St. Florentin, son of La Vrillière, the French Secretary of State, provided that La Vrillière were created a French duke. This condition Madame La Vrillière had made a *sine qua non*. King George was very anxious that the union should take place, and instructions were accordingly sent out by Carteret to Schaub to use all his influence with the Duke of Orleans, the Regent of France during the minority of Louis XV., to obtain the desired dukedom. Townshend, aware of the hostility of Schaub towards himself, thought it prudent that the English minister should be watched, and not be entirely intrusted with the conduct of a matter in which the King was much interested.

Another reason also induced Townshend to come to this conclusion. On the death of Cardinal Dubois, which had only recently occurred, the Duke of Orleans had

recalled to power Count Nocé, an intimate friend, who had been disgraced by the late Cardinal. Now between Count Nocé and Sir Luke there was ill-blood, the Count believing that the English minister had been instrumental with the Cardinal in procuring his disgrace. Both Townshend and Walpole well knew that the Duke of Orleans was easily led by those in whom he had confidence, and that disastrous consequences might happen to English interests if the Duke allowed himself to be poisoned by the personal enmity of Count Nocé. Townshend therefore suggested that some one should be appointed to go over to Paris to watch the conduct of Schaub, and to ascertain the exact state of affairs. The King, much to the delight of the brother ministers, warmly approved of the idea. "But as on the one hand," writes Townshend to Walpole from Hanover,* "it is of great importance to the King to be apprised, as soon as possible, of the real situation of affairs in France, so on the other hand it will require great caution and address to come at the truth in such a manner as may neither hurt Sir Luke Schaub's credit with the Duke of Orleans nor create a jealousy in Sir Luke, of the King's intending to withdraw his confidence from him. Upon these considerations, his Majesty has thought it not advisable to send any one directly to France from this place, which could not have been done without noise and giving umbrage of one kind or other, but has rather chosen to have somebody in whose fidelity and dexterity he can depend set out from England, and take Paris on his way hither, under pretence of a curiosity to see that place, and without owning to any one living the business he is employed in." The person thus selected was Horace

* "Hardwicke Papers," September 21, 1723. Coxe.

Walpole, who was dispatched to Paris under pretence of arranging the accession of Portugal to the Quadruple Alliance.

A few words about Horace Walpole. He was the only surviving brother of Sir Robert, and had early given signs of the talents which afterwards distinguished him. At Cambridge he had taken high honours, and, like Lord Carteret, was regarded in after-life as one of the best classical scholars of the day. On quitting the University he identified himself with the Whig party, and accompanied General Stanhope to Spain in the capacity of military secretary, where he was present at the siege of Barcelona. But, preferring politics to the sword, after a brief interval spent as secretary to Lord Carleton, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and afterwards as secretary to his brother-in-law, Lord Townshend, during the congress at Gertruydenberg, he entered Parliament in 1713, and became a stanch adherent of the Whig policy. He took the part of the French Protestant refugees, and warmly denounced the Treaty of Utrecht. On the accession of George I. he was appointed by Lord Townshend Under-Secretary of State, and became actively engaged during his brother's administration in all the affairs of the kingdom. When the country was threatened by the first Jacobite rebellion, Horace Walpole was sent to Holland to obtain additional military aid, and acquitted himself of his duties in the most judicious and expeditious manner. When Sweden, conscious of her might, began to assume the aggressive, he was dispatched again to the Hague to form an alliance between the English and Dutch fleets for the protection of commerce in the Baltic; and he was one of the chief agents in forming the Triple Alliance between England,

France, and the States-General, until, for reasons highly creditable to his honour, he sent in his resignation. At the overthrow of the Townshend-Walpole administration he retired from public life, and it was not until he was summoned by his brother to undertake this secret mission that he again served the State.

On arriving at Paris Horace Walpole at once made good use of his letters of introduction, and soon perceived the exact situation of affairs. He wrote home that the Duke of Orleans was most anxious to continue on good terms with England, that it was quite true that a most bitter feeling existed between Count Nocé and Sir Luke Schaub, and that, thanks to the prejudices instilled by the Count, the Duke of Orleans had withdrawn his confidence entirely from Sir Luke. He then hinted that Sir Luke, a Swiss, a man of no birth, wanting in tact, and of not much ability, was scarcely the proper representative of England at the French Court, especially as the Parisians cordially disliked the man. Throughout his correspondence, whenever Horace has occasion to mention the name of Schaub, it is always in disparaging terms. Could it be otherwise? The one went to supplant the other, and it was scarcely in human nature for the criticism that ensued to be either just or favourable. Without believing all the strictures passed upon Sir Luke by Horace Walpole, there is little doubt he was not a fitting person to represent the interests of England in the first society of Europe. He was not a gentleman, he lacked all the social charms his office implies, he was untruthful and clumsy in his lies, and he was considered a bore at the court to which he was accredited.

In writing to Lord Carteret Schaub had made it appear

that La Vrillière would without difficulty obtain his coveted dukedom. Yet the contrary was the fact. Horace Walpole had been closeted secretly with the Duke of Orleans, and the question of the dukedom discussed. The Duke had said he wished nothing better than to oblige his good brother of England, but the French aristocracy were strongly opposed to the elevation of La Vrillière to the peerage; he had no claims to such an honour; Schaub was very much *épris* with Madame La Vrillière, and had deceived the King of England by false reports. "In fact," said the Regent, "in this request the dignity of France is involved, for it is said that the King of England, not being able to marry his bastard daughter to an English nobleman, has therefore sent her over to France, as if any one were good enough for our *noblesse*." Thus spoke the Duke of Orleans, and the conversation was duly transmitted to Whitehall. It was evident, wrote Horace, that Sir Luke had exceeded his powers; that his indiscreet haste had compromised the honour of the King, and that La Vrillière had no chance of obtaining a coronet.

Scarcely had the intelligence reached Sir Robert Walpole than the news arrived of the sudden death of the Duke of Orleans. An epicure, a *roué*, and not a little of the sot, he had been ailing for some time, but having declined to follow the advice of his physicians, he hastened his end, and passed away in a fit of apoplexy. He was succeeded as First Minister of France by the Duke of Bourbon, a man equally profligate, but lacking the talents and geniality of his predecessor. Schaub, who disliked Horace Walpole with all the spite and jealousy of a man who feels he is being spied upon by a rival, thought the appointment of a new minister a good opportunity to recover lost ground.

He lamentably failed. The Duke of Bourbon sought an interview with Horace Walpole, and complained that Sir Luke was a nuisance, that he had been importunate in the La Vrillière affair, and that nothing would induce the young King or the French aristocracy to grant the favour requested by the King of England. Horace reported these complaints to his brother, and said that his situation at Paris was now unbearable, owing to the peculiar position in which he stood with Sir Luke—the latter being ambassador, but not in the confidence of the Court; Walpole not ambassador, but in the confidence of the Court—and that he must either be recalled home or be appointed to succeed to the embassy.

The receipt of this letter decided matters. Both Townshend and Sir Robert felt that now if ever was the time to compel the King to choose between Lord Carteret and themselves. If Schaub—the creature of Carteret and the interpreter of his wishes—were recalled, Carteret could not fail to regard such dismissal as a reflection upon himself, and the result would be his resignation of the seals. Thus the battle lay ostensibly between Schaub and Horace Walpole, but really between Carteret and the brother ministers. Sir Robert now wrote over to his brother begging him to dispatch an official letter, detailing the injury done to English interests by the appointment of Schaub, and the personal unpopularity of the man, which would be laid before the King for immediate consideration. Horace acted upon these instructions and forwarded the required indictment.

In this dispatch he said that he was perfectly willing to serve his Majesty to the full extent of his abilities, but that at Paris it was simply impossible for him to act in the

King's interests so long as he was associated with Sir Luke Schaub. Towards Sir Luke he had no personal animosity whatever, but he differed so thoroughly from him on all points, and in his manner of dealing with people and things, that he was unable to show him either confidence or friendship. At the present moment he was much restricted in the duties that were necessary for him to fulfil owing to the system of espionage adopted towards him by Sir Luke. Had he seen that Sir Luke was a man of judgment and discretion, he would have been only too happy to consult with him on all occasions; but, to speak frankly, the English Ambassador had little talent, and had so acted as to render himself "odious to many and disagreeable to everybody." In fact, as long as Sir Luke remained at Paris, so long would the interests and honour of the King suffer.

This candid epistle produced the desired effect. Horace Walpole was appointed ambassador at Paris. Schaub was recalled, and his patron, Lord Carteret, dispatched to Dublin as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, the imbecile Duke of Newcastle succeeding him as Secretary of State. Shortly afterwards the marriage between the daughter of Madame de Platen and Count St. Florentin took place; the mother of the bridegroom contenting herself for the loss of the ducal coronet with the dowry of ten thousand pounds that the King of England had settled upon her daughter-in-law.*

The removal of Carteret to Dublin had occurred at a moment of great anxiety. Never had a Lord-Lieutenant been appointed to take office under more trying circumstances. For some time past Ireland had suffered from a

* "Walpole à la Cour de France," 1723—1730. Par le Comte de Baillon.

great deficiency in her copper coinage. The small tradesmen had to resort to various expedients to meet the difficulty, whilst employers of labour were often compelled to pay their hands with pieces of card, representing a certain value, sealed and signed with their names. To remedy this evil, Sunderland, when in power, had devised a scheme to improve the state of the Irish currency, which now fell upon Walpole, as head of the Treasury, to carry out. A contract had been entered into for the coining of halfpence and farthings to the amount of £108,000, between the Government and one William Wood, whom Swift in his Drapier Letters maliciously calls a "hardware man" and a "low mechanic," but who in reality was proprietor of extensive iron-works.

From the very first Walpole had disapproved of the idea; he knew that an irritable and discontented race like the Irish would object to any improvement in their currency, unless everything connected with the scheme was exclusively Irish—the contractor to be an Irishman, the copper to be Irish metal, and the coin to be turned out from a mint in Dublin. Walpole was also aware, from certain papers in the pigeon-holes of the Treasury, that the Duchess of Kendal was to reap large profits out of the contract, and that should such a fact ever be made public it would have a most injurious effect, not only upon the Ministry, but also upon the royal family. Still, after the support the First Lord of the Treasury had received from the Duchess in checkmating the tactics of Carteret, he felt it would endanger the power he so much loved if he opposed the scheme that Sunderland had undertaken, and which the favourite mistress of the King was determined upon having carried out.

Desirous, however, that all just grounds of complaint should be removed, Walpole took especial care that the new currency should be as perfect as art could make it. The great Sir Isaac Newton was at that time Master of the Mint, and the execution of the patent was intrusted to his hands. In workmanship and fineness of metal the new coinage was superior to that of England, but the moment it was shipped across St. George's Channel and put into circulation the fiercest opposition broke out throughout the north of the sister isle. The Irish refused to accept it. A cry was raised that the coin was bad both in weight and quality, and that the new currency was but a Saxon trick to benefit certain English capitalists at the expense of the prosperity and welfare of Ireland. The leading officials in Dublin, none of whom had been consulted in the passing of the patent, and who, consequently, were very indignant with the Government at the slight, warmly supported the opposition of the people. The Irish Parliament met, and its members, hot with national zeal, moved that addresses be presented to the Crown to redress the grievance. It was said that the patentee had infringed the terms of his patent, and had supplied coin different in metal and workmanship, and that, even if the terms of his patent had been complied with, a loss of at least one hundred and fifty per cent. must accrue to the nation. Without a dissentient voice the resolution was passed that "the circulation of the halfpence would be highly prejudicial to the revenue, destructive of the commerce, and of most dangerous consequence to the rights and properties of the Irish subjects."

These charges were transmitted to Walpole, who owned himself "amazed how any grave assembly could come to

such rash and false assertions," and he at once proceeded to answer the accusations in detail. He denied that the terms of the patent had been infringed, or that the copper coinage was deficient either in quantity or quality. "Sir Isaac Newton was consulted in every step in passing the patent," he writes to Townshend at Hanover;* "a controller was directed by the patent that was to assay, try, and prove the fineness and goodness of the copper, and the weight of the coin. . . . Upon the first apprehension of this trouble the controller was directed to try and prove the coin; and he has reported that it answered in all respects. . . . And as to what is said, that this coinage for Ireland is not so good as the last coinage for England, it is admitted that the farthings and halfpence are less in weight, which at the time of passing the patent was considered, and found to be necessary; for your lordship knows the exchange of money between England and Ireland is about twelve pounds per cent., which is above threepence per pound of copper; the duty of importation is one halfpenny per pound; and the patentee then insisted upon what he since found true by experience, that he should be obliged to make an allowance of about ten pounds per cent. to such persons as should take in traffic quantities of this money at first to issue and circulate in Ireland. These considerations sufficiently justify the difference in the weight of the two coins, when at the same time it is admitted on all hands that the Irish coin in fineness of metal exceeds the English."

He then went on to show that, so far from the profit being 150. per cent., as the Irish Assembly had alleged, it was actually under 20 per cent. "The resolution that

* "Townshend Papers," October 18, 1723. Coxe.

makes the loss 150 per cent.," he writes, "is founded upon a computation that copper uncoined is worth 12*d.* a pound; now a pound of copper halfpence and farthings are by the patent to pass for 2*s.* 6*d.*; therefore the loss is 1*s.* 6*d.* But a pound of copper prepared for the Mint in London cost there 1*s.* 6*d.*, the charge of coining a pound of copper is at the Mint 4*d.*; and I think the duty of a pound of copper coined, imported into Ireland, is a halfpenny per pound, besides the exchange, and which, with all allowances, comes to 20 per cent., and all this is laid aside, and the copper money valued at the supposed value of the rough Irish copper, which is much inferior to English copper."

Still, in spite of these gross exaggerations and malevolent conclusions, Walpole recommended the King to adopt a frank and conciliatory policy towards Ireland. The Irish addresses were forwarded to Hanover, and whilst enclosing them Walpole suggested the answer he thought it expedient that the Crown should make.

"As I think the only present consideration is," he writes to Townshend,* "what answer his Majesty shall give to them, it seems to me a matter of great nicety and difficulty; for, as they have made this the first business of the session, and everything that concerns the Government is still behind, if an answer distasteful to the Irish nation should be given, it may be of ill-consequence, and create many new difficulties in Ireland, which perhaps was one of the chief designs in bringing this matter on. On the other hand, since it is most certain that they have gone on so precipitately as to be mistaken in all their facts, it must never be admitted that the King, in his answer,

* "Townshend Papers," October 23, 1723. Coxe.

should take those things for granted which are not true, or yield in that general point, wherein both Houses so expressly declare against the coining any money in Great Britain for Ireland; which makes me of opinion that the King's answer should be general, and somewhat to this effect: 'That his Majesty is very much concerned to see that the granting this patent, agreeable to the practice of his royal predecessors, had given so much uneasiness to his subjects of Ireland; and if there have been any abuses committed by the patentee, that his Majesty is willing to give the necessary orders for inquiring into and punishing those abuses, and will do everything that is in his power for the satisfaction of his people.' "

The result of this suggestion was to refer the matter to a committee of the Privy Council in England, which, after a rigid investigation into all the grievances complained of, fully exonerated the patentee from all the charges heaped upon him, and declared that the manner in which the terms of the patent had been carried out left nothing to be desired.

Still Wood, desirous of removing the discontent of the Irish to his coinage, agreed to reduce it from £108,000 to £40,000 value, and proposed that no more than $5\frac{1}{2}$ of it should be a legal tender at any one payment. This reduction was accepted by Walpole, who sent at once the necessary directions over to Ireland consequent upon the recent change. But the Irish refused to be satisfied. On all sides—from the pulpit, from the pamphleteers, from the balladmongers, and from those who make agitation their business—the wildest opposition was raised against the new currency. The leader of this discontent, the head and front of all this hostility to the Government,

was Swift. He hated the Whigs; he was forgotten; he panted once more for power and notoriety, and the opportunity was one that exactly suited the brilliancy of his acrid talents. He saw an excitable people animated by a sincere and jealous hate, but lacking discipline and concentration in the expression of their rage. He placed himself at their head, directing their efforts and focussing their fury. His powerful intellect at once grasped the situation; by culpable exaggerations, ingenious suppressions, and wilful misrepresentations, he thought he saw it in his power to wound the Government into submission.

At the end of a few days a series of letters appeared, supposed to be written by M. B., a Drapier of Dublin, lashing the new coinage with all the satire and invective of a consummate master in the art. In these productions the author represents himself as "a poor ignorant shopkeeper utterly unskilled in law," but few were deceived by the assertion. In the style of their composition, in the pungency of their satire, in their sneers, their fierceness, and their mock humility, it was easy to detect in these epistles the pen of the man who had given to the world "The Travels of Captain Gulliver." The effect of these letters upon the Irish was instantaneous. Throughout the island their circulation was enormous. Not a shibbeen but had a well-thumbed copy, and the advice contained in its pages was never disputed. It was an open secret that the Dean of St. Patrick's was the patriot who had thus come forward to defend the nation against the tyranny of the English, and Swift was everywhere hailed as the Public Deliverer. In vain Carteret, who had assumed the Lord-Lieutenancy when the Drapier Letters were at the very height of their popularity, offered a handsome reward for the discovery

of the author, and sent the printer to trial. None came forward to accuse the Dean, and the grand jury threw out the bill against the printer.

As was to be expected, this act of the Lord-Lieutenant's only made matters worse. Swift became a martyr as well as a patriot, and the hostility to the patent deepened in intensity. An association was formed for the rejection of the coinage, and members enrolled themselves in thousands. Soon every landowner, every tradesman, every peasant had pledged himself not to touch the hated halfpence. Against this uniform and combined hostility the Government thought it unwise to struggle. "The popular frenzy and aversion to the taking of this money," writes Walpole to the Duke of Newcastle, "I am afraid is now carried to such a degree that it will scarce be prudent to attempt the forcing this inclination, especially where they are supported and countenanced in their obstinacy by their governors and those that are in authority under his Majesty."

The suggestion of Walpole was acted upon, and the scheme of the patent abandoned. As a compensation for the loss he had been put to and for the unjust strictures passed upon his name, Wood received a pension of three thousand pounds. Thus ended an episode which constitutes as curious and puzzling a chapter in the annals of frivolous objections as has ever been recorded. Why the Irish, after complaining of the deficiency of their currency, should have objected to its improvement; why they should have been so bitter against the new coinage being worked in England, when such had before been the case; why, when they found all their arguments respecting the new currency clearly disproved, and that the new coins were to

be well made, of good weight and of superior metal, they should have preferred to tolerate the inconveniences they laboured under, rather than accept Wood's pence and halfpence—are questions which it is beyond History to answer.

No sooner had peace been restored to Ireland, by the withdrawal of the patent, than the Government found itself harassed by disturbances equally grave north of the Tweed. For some time past considerable dissatisfaction had been expressed in the House of Commons at the exclusion of the Scotch from the taxation on malt. Member after member had raised the question, but the existing Government, whether from timidity or indifference, declined to take any active steps in the matter. It now fell to the share of Walpole to grapple with the difficulty. During a sitting of the Committee of Ways and Means it was suggested by Thomas Brodrick that, instead of a duty on malt in Scotland, a duty of sixpence on every barrel of ale should be levied. Walpole, whose favourite maxim was *quieta non movere*, and who well remembered the bad feeling that the same question had excited when it was before mooted in 1713, at first opposed the motion of Brodrick; but finding that his views were in the minority he acquiesced, managing, however, to reduce the tax from sixpence to threepence.

The moment the news travelled north serious riots ensued in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The military were called out, and, after some little difficulty, the leaders of the mob apprehended and sent to trial. But as the Irish jury had refused to convict the printer of the Drapier Letters, so now a Scotch jury acted on the same principle, and the rioters were declared innocent and set at liberty. This defeat of the Government added only more

fuel to the fire of the Opposition. Supported by their countrymen, the Scotch brewers entered into a combination, pledging themselves not to give security for the new duty, nor to brew, if the duty were demanded. "I greatly apprehend," writes Walpole to Townshend,* "that the affairs in Scotland will come to be a serious matter, and prove as difficult a task as anything that has happened since his Majesty's accession."

Happily his fears were exaggerated, but still the situation was sufficiently grave. As had been the case in the affair of Wood's patent, so now in this agitation upon the malt tax, those who should have stemmed the tide of discontent did all in their power to swell its flood. The Secretary of State for Scotland was the Duke of Roxburgh, the friend of Carteret, who, as we have seen, had opposed the supremacy of Walpole in the Cabinet. Aware that his past intrigues were well known to his brother ministers, and that his tenure of office was uncertain, he thought the present agitation a favourable opportunity to harass the Government and oust his chiefs from power. Accordingly his Grace availed himself of the advantages of his position to encourage the resistance of the disaffected. He delayed the orders of the Government; he hinted that, as the Irish had been successful in rejecting Wood's patent, so now the Scotch, provided they were unanimous, would meet with their reward, and the new duty be consigned to the same limbo as the new coinage. He encouraged the reports, spread abroad by mischievous agitators, that the King was opposed to the measure, that Walpole would soon be disgraced, and that next session would see most important changes in the Ministry.

* "Hardwicke Papers," July 29, 1725. Coxe.

But these underhand tactics were not lost upon the vigilant First Lord of the Treasury. Spies and the recipients of further favours kept him well informed as to the movements of his treacherous colleague. He resolved to checkmate them. No minister less brooked interference or a division of power than Walpole. He would be Cæsar or he would be nothing. The moment he saw attempts made to limit his authority or control his supremacy, he at once assumed the aggressive, and drove the designer, as he had driven Carteret, from off his path. His Grace of Roxburgh should be dismissed, and one more loyal reign in his stead.

He wrote to Hanover that nothing could conquer the present disorder save the dismissal of John, Duke of Roxburgh, and that even the most cautious and discreet who were behind the scenes were amazed that it was not already done.* No notice being taken of his first complaint, he recurred to it a few days afterwards. "But, my lord, when we have tried everything," he says to Townshend,† "I cannot but have recourse to the opinion I have already given, and, though no man can foretell where or how this will end, it is most certain the whole springs from a contest for power, and this I dare affirm is the opinion of every thinking man in Scotland. His Majesty can only determine, but I beg leave to observe that the present administration is the first that was ever yet known to be answerable for the whole Government, with a Secretary of State for one part of the kingdom who they are assured acts counter to all their measures, or at least whom they cannot at least confide in." This time his remonstrances were not in vain. The Duke of

* "Hardwicke Papers," August 24, 1725. Coxe. † Ibid. August 28.

Roxburgh was requested to resign, and Walpole centred in himself the duties of the Secretary of State for Scotland, but appointed as his agent the Earl of Isla, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal in Scotland, and a most devoted adherent of the policy of the Cabinet.

Thanks to the tact and firmness both of Walpole and of his faithful deputy, the opposition was soon forced to surrender. The combination of the brewers was broken up, and, in spite of past pledges and stout assurances of resistance, the Edinburgh and Glasgow maltsters deemed prudence the better part of valour, and returned to their duty. "It is with the greatest satisfaction," writes Walpole to his brother-in-law,* "that I give your lordship the following account of the present state of affairs in Scotland, and, as this great happy turn is entirely owing to the industry, ability, and resolution of Lord Isla, I can never say enough in his commendation, or do him justice in relating his great dexterity in the conduct and management of this nice and difficult point. . . . . Your lordship has been already acquainted that the resolution concerted was to begin with prosecuting the brewers before the Justices of the Peace for non-payment of the duties charged upon the stock in hand. . . . On the 27th, late at night . . . . the brewers sent a messenger to desire the Quarter Session of the Justices, where the penalties for non-payment are to be levied by distress, might be adjourned to October next, to which an immediate answer was returned, that nothing would be accepted or heard but an entire submission and an immediate return to their duty; upon which, in their assembly, they fell into debates, and various opinions began to arise among themselves, and at last unanimously

* "Hardwicke Papers," September 3, 1725. Coxe.

agreed to be determined by a question, *Brew or not?* Which being put by the Chairman, he began to take their votes *seriatim* at the right hand; but his right-hand man thought it an hardship upon him to be obliged to speak first, the left-hand man thought so too, and they could get nobody to give his vote first. At last one, Gray, declared he thought they had nothing now left to do but to return to their trades; that he would not be bound by the majority, but began the vote, and voted *brew*. He was immediately followed by another, upon which two warm ones hoped they would hold out till their brethren were set at liberty; but these not being supported the assembly broke up, and such of them as had their things in readiness fell to brewing that night, and on the 28th at noon above forty brewhouses were hard at work in Edinburgh, and ten more at Leith."

Thus happily ended an affair which promised at the outset to be very serious, but which, like most mob agitations, was made to yield before a judicious firmness and a discreet compulsion. "I think we have once more got Ireland and Scotland quiet," writes Walpole, "if we take care to keep them so." The King was so pleased with the conduct of his minister that the Order of the Bath was revived, and Walpole created a knight; the following year he received the Garter, being the only commoner, excepting Admiral Montague, afterwards Earl of Sandwich, who has ever been so highly honoured.

Satisfied with the state of politics at home, and domestic peace now restored, the attention of Walpole was directed to the ever-shifting movements on the Continent. Threatening clouds in the political horizon had of late been fast springing up. Philip V., the half-mad King of Spain, had

been tempted to join the Quadruple Alliance by the bait held out to him of a double marriage between the branches of the House of Bourbon. His son, Don Luis, had been united to a daughter of the Regent Duke of Orleans, whilst his daughter, the Infanta Mary Anne, was betrothed to Louis XV., the young King of France. As the Infanta was but a child of four years of age, it was considered desirable that, as she was to be a future Queen of France, her education should be conducted in the country over which she was one day to reign. Accordingly she was transferred from Madrid to Paris. The proposed alliance was, however, not very popular among the French, on account of the youth of the *fiancée*, and the distant hopes held out of issue. But the one to whom the meditated marriage was the most hateful was the Duke of Bourbon, the First Minister of France. Louis XV. was a delicate young man, and it was thought by his physicians not at all improbable that he would not live to consummate his marriage. Should he die without issue, the next heir would therefore be the young Duke of Orleans, the son of the late Regent. Now between the Duke of Bourbon and the Duke of Orleans the bitterest hate existed, and Bourbon resolved, *coûte que coûte*, that his cousin of Orleans should not ascend the throne of France. His first step was to send back the Infanta Mary Anne to Spain, and annul the contract that had been entered into between the Courts of Versailles and Madrid; his next, to seek a bride for his King which would render succession to the Crown less distant. He made overtures to the King of England for the Princess Anne; but George—who, in spite of his moral failings, was as zealous for Protestantism as his ancestor James II. had been for Roman Catholicism—declared that no

daughter of his should become a subject of the Pope, in order to find a husband. Bourbon now turned his attention to Mary Leczinska, daughter of the exiled King of Poland, and no objection being met with, the alliance was resolved upon.

As can be imagined, the rupture of the union between the Infanta and Louis and the hasty return of the child to Madrid was regarded by the Spaniards, the proudest and most punctilious of people, as an insult of the grossest kind. It was with difficulty that the authorities could prevent a general massacre of the French residents in Madrid. "All the Bourbons are a race of devils!" exclaimed the indignant mother to the French envoy, but, remembering that her husband belonged to that family, she turned towards him adding, "except your Majesty." The offended parents vowed that nothing short of the Duke of Bourbon's coming to Madrid and imploring pardon on his knees should reconcile them to one who had so insulted their family pride and the dignity of their nation. It was hoped that England as well as Spain would resent the conduct of France in this matter, but when Townshend and Walpole declined to be drawn into the dispute, or break their relations with the Court of Versailles, indignant Madrid hated the English as much as she hated the French. The Spanish plenipotentiaries were recalled from the Congress of Cambray, and Ripperda, a Dutch adventurer, who had risen high in the Spanish diplomatic service, through the patronage of Alberoni, and who had lately been sent on a secret mission to Vienna to the Emperor, was instructed to form a close alliance between Spain and the Empire as a counterbalance to the evident union that existed between England and France.

Acting upon his instructions, Ripperda, somewhat to his astonishment, found little difficulty in carrying them out to the letter. The truth was considerable irritation had been excited of late in Vienna respecting the recent achievements of continental diplomacy. The Emperor had considered himself aggrieved at the conduct of the quadruple allies. He feared France, he was jealous of Hanover, and he had made enemies of England and Holland by establishing an East India Company at Ostend contrary to the terms of the Treaty of Westphalia. The Emperor was therefore in the humour to pay every attention to the advances of Spain; and these advances were terribly tempting. Spain agreed to sanction the Ostend Company, though but the year before she had strongly opposed its establishment; to acknowledge the Emperor's right to Naples, Sicily, the Milanese, and the Netherlands; to withdraw all claims upon the fortresses of Tuscany, and to guarantee the Pragmatic sanction, or, in other words, to allow the succession of the hereditary states of Austria, the Emperor only having daughters, to descend in the female line. It was not long before Ripperda wrote home that an alliance offensive and defensive had been signed between Spain and the Empire—both powers agreeing to support each other should either be attacked.

But there were darker matters in the background. Diplomatists felt sure that Spain would not concede all that she had granted to the Empire without some equivalent. Secret articles were surmised to have been added to the treaty. The suspicion was correct. As a set-off against the liberality of Spain the Empire had agreed to support the Court of Madrid in its demands for the restitution of Gibraltar and Minorca, and in case of refusal to declare

war against Great Britain, and support the cause of the Pretender. But this compact, secret as it had been kept, was not concealed from the vigilance of the English sovereign. Years afterwards, in alluding to this treaty, Walpole said,* "It was not his late Majesty's ministers here who informed him; it was he that informed them of the transaction; he had his information at Hanover, and it was so good that he could not be deceived. I know as well, and am as certain, that there were such articles as those very persons who drew up the articles."

But England had not only to defend herself against the machinations of Spain and the Empire; another enemy now appeared on the scene. The Empress Catherine, widow of Peter the Great, having married her daughter to the Duke of Holstein, was most desirous of recovering Schleswig, which Denmark had seized from Holstein. She now united herself to Spain and Austria, and, aided with money from Madrid and Vienna, was busy making preparations to attain her object. This triple alliance, especially since the secret articles were known to the Ministry, caused no little anxiety to the Government, and more particularly to Townshend, to whom the administration of our foreign affairs was chiefly intrusted. It was felt that the aims of the triple alliance could only be effectually kept in check by the formation of a counter-alliance. Accordingly Horace Walpole was instructed to sound France upon the subject, and within a few weeks of the Treaty of Vienna a defensive alliance was signed at Hanover (Sept. 3rd, 1725) between Great Britain, France, and Prussia. It was agreed that in the event of any attack

* March 29, 1734. Parl. Hist., vol. ix. p. 598. See also Walpole's reply to the charges of Sandys in Chapter XII. of this work.

upon one of the contracting parties the other two were to come to the assistance either with men or money.

No sooner had this treaty been signed than it encountered all the hostility of the Opposition in Parliament. Horace Walpole, who had been the chief instrument in drawing up its clauses, came expressly to London to defend his handiwork. In a long studied speech he defended the motives which had induced the King to enter into the treaty, and depicted in forcible colours the ambitious designs of Spain and Austria. "His Majesty," he said, "always watchful with regard to the interests of his English subjects, had strongly remonstrated with Spain and the Empire; but his remonstrances had been met at Madrid with coldness, at Vienna with arrogance. The Imperial Cabinet had even insinuated that if the King persisted in his resolution of acting contrary to the Treaty of Vienna, not only would the Emperor consider himself as freed from guaranteeing the Protestant Succession to the throne of England, but he would feel himself at liberty to pursue what conduct he chose towards the German possessions of the King."

The Opposition, however, declined to approve of the policy of the Government. England was to be sacrificed for the promotion of purely Hanoverian interests. "It is a treaty," said the first Pitt, "the tendency of which is discovered in the name." "Thus Hanover," writes Chesterfield, "rides triumphant on the shoulders of England." Nor, in spite of the views held by the Tory party, was Hanover a whit more pleased with the treaty. At Herrenhausen the German ministers complained that Hanover was being sacrificed to the vengeance of Austria for the sake of English trade, and denounced the new

league as bitterly as Pitt or Chesterfield had ever done. Thus at Westminster the Treaty of Hanover was opposed for being too German, whilst in the kingdom of the Elector it was branded as being too English.*

That Hanover had good grounds for complaint is evident, for the treaty was drawn up purely in favour of English interests. Those who opposed it at home were unaware of the secret articles. The Treaty of Hanover was entered into to prevent the Pretender ascending the throne, to prevent Gibraltar and Minorca from falling into the hands of Spain, and to prevent hurt being done to English commercial interests by the maintenance of the Ostend Company. But in these objects Hanover had little interest. The Ostend Company was nothing to Hanover; whether Gibraltar remained in the hands of the English or the Spaniards was immaterial to her, nor did she take a deep interest in the movements of the Pretender. But she was gravely concerned at the prospect of exciting the animosity of the head of the Empire, of exposing the Electorate to the chances of invasion, and of placing in jeopardy the prosperity of her people. Indeed, so deeply did the King sympathize with the fear of his Hanoverian subjects that it was with no little difficulty that Townshend had extorted his signature.

Walpole, whether it was because he had taken only a secondary part in its transaction, and was therefore jealous of Townshend, or because he entertained real and sound objections, had not wholly approved of the Treaty of Hanover. He regretted that a union with Portugal had been neglected, whose aid would have been invaluable

* Coxe. Stanhope's "History of England," vol. ii. "Walpole à la Cour de France," par Count de Baillon.

in case of a war with Spain. He objected to the large sums of money which Townshend had asked for to gain over Sweden. He did not believe in the hostility of Russia. He doubted the sincerity of France, and feared—fears that were afterwards realised—that she would avoid paying her share of the subsidies, and thus make the chief burden of the expense fall upon England. But though he objected to certain clauses in the treaty, he felt bound to give it his unqualified support when he was informed of the nature of the secret articles, and that an invasion in favour of the Pretender was seriously meditated. He introduced the matter in the House of Commons, and the treaty was approved of by a large majority.

For the next two years, until the death of the King, foreign affairs were the chief topics of political interest. In the North English money and English ships gained the day. Sweden separated herself from Russia and acceded to the Treaty of Hanover, whilst the Empress was forced to abandon her designs in favour of the Duke of Holstein. In France the Duke of Bourbon had fallen from power, and the amiable and pacific Cardinal Fleury, the friend of the Walpoles, became his successor. Spain had besieged Gibraltar, the Emperor was about to march into Holland, when, mainly owing to the pacific views diligently advocated by Walpole, it was agreed to refer the various matters under dispute to a general congress.

Such was the state of affairs when the King departed for Hanover in the June of 1727. It was a tragic journey. His Majesty reached Delden in perfect health and set out early the next morning. At Bentheim he felt indisposed, but refused to stay and rest himself for any length of time. On arriving at Ippenburen he was quite lethargic, and

could only feebly direct his attendants to drive him on rapidly to the palace of his brother, the Bishop of Osnaburgh. The horses were lashed into full speed, but in vain. The King of England had breathed his last long before the travelling-chariot turned into the avenue which led to the episcopal palace of Osnaburgh.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXCISE BILL. 1727—1733.

THE new King who now ascended the throne under the title of George II. was, in spite of the slander of the Jacobites, who accused Count Konigsmark of interfering with his paternity, a true son of his father. In tastes and habits he was thoroughly a German. He spoke English indifferently, though with less accent than his father. His patriotism, like that of his father, was very sensitive when the interests of Hanover were in danger, but hard and callous when those of England were at stake. Like his father, he was a man of ordinary abilities, but fond of the petty details of business. Like his father, he was freely addicted to the society of mistresses, and Lady Suffolk played the same part in the court of George II. as the Duchess of Kendal had played in the court of George I. Again, like his father, his courage was undoubted, and his only virtue. His character can be summed up in a few words: he was mean, selfish, passionate, unforgiving to those who offended him, a warm though uncertain friend to those who supported him, and, unlike his father, keenly avaricious. It was this last-named vice that made the spiteful say that the Duchess of Kendal should have been his mother and not the persecuted Sophia of Zell.

Between George I. and the heir-apparent the most

open dislike had always existed. Whether the King was jealous of his son, or simply hated him because he took the part of his unhappy mother, it is certain that nothing could be less parental or less filial than the feelings entertained by one towards the other. The two seldom met save on some great state occasion, when the presence of the Prince could not be avoided. The King wandered from St. James's to Windsor, or from Windsor to Herrenhausen; the son remained fixed at his town-house in Leicester Fields or his country-seat at Richmond Lodge. This breach between the King and the Prince naturally reflected itself in the politics of the day. Those who were the advisers of the Crown were hated at Leicester Fields, whilst those who rallied round the standard of the Prince were visited with the dislike of their sovereign. Thus the Whigs of the old school were in favour at St. James's, whilst the Opposition—the men who were Tories but not Jacobites, and the Whigs who were offended with Walpole or disapproved of his policy—regarded the Prince as their leader and swelled his little court. Between the two camps was a feud that refused to be reconciled.

Some little time before the King's death the ranks of the Opposition had been strengthened by the accession of two most powerful adherents. There are no politicians more bitter or more unscrupulous than those who desert their party because their reward has not been commensurate with their services, or who go into opposition from a personal grievance against the minister in power. These causes were both at work in the enlistment of Pulteney and Bolingbroke under the colours of the Prince of Wales. After years passed in exile, Bolingbroke had desired to return to his country. He declared that he would never

reveal any secret nor betray any friend, and that he was ready to serve his King with zeal and devotion. His friends took up his case, and after no slight opposition, and thanks to the Duchess of Kendal—who had been handsomely bribed by the petitioner—he was allowed to return to his country. Still the restoration of Bolingbroke was not complete. His estates came into his possession, but his rights as a peer of the realm were withheld from him. "Here I am then," he writes to Swift, "two-thirds restored; my person safe, and my estate—with all the other property I have acquired, or may acquire—secured to me. But the attainder is kept carefully and prudently in force, lest so corrupt a member should come again into the House of Lords, and his bad leaven should sour that sweet untainted mass." For this restriction he was indebted to Walpole. From the very first Walpole had opposed his restoration; he had rejected the advances Bolingbroke had made towards him; and it was only by pressure being put upon him from the Kendal influence at court that he had partially consented to the prayer of the exile. He agreed to restore Bolingbroke to his fortune, but not to his peerage. Aware that it was Walpole, and Walpole alone, who stood between him and his seat in the House of Lords, Bolingbroke hated the minister with all the bitterness of disappointed ambition. He lived now for one object—to hurl his rival from power.

Nor was the animosity of Pulteney a whit less keen or vindictive. Between Walpole and Pulteney there had been a warm and generous intimacy. The splendid abilities of Pulteney—his brilliant eloquence, his extensive reading, his wit, his literary powers—had soon raised him to notice. On the accession of George I. he was appointed Secretary at War, and at the time when

Walpole was sent to the Tower, on the charge of embezzlement, he stood up in defence of his friend. Again, when the schism of 1717 took place, and Townshend and Walpole sent in their resignations, Pulteney also threw in his lot with the brother ministers, and retired from the office he then held. When, therefore, Walpole had been restored to power, and had triumphed over the intrigues of his enemies, Pulteney reasonably expected to reap the reward of one who had adhered to a fallen cause, and who had proved himself a true and faithful friend. Unhappily, that greed for power which was the bane of Walpole's character now interfered. Pulteney was among the most able and brilliant men in the House of Commons. It was impossible for him to hold office and yet play that second part in all ministerial transactions which Walpole had resolved should be the lot of all those who served in his Cabinet. "The firm," he had once said, alluding to the position of Townshend, "is not Townshend and Walpole, but Walpole and Townshend." Throughout the history of his administration we shall see that the moment a colleague proved himself dangerous to the supremacy of Walpole, either by the subtlety of his intrigues or the superiority of his abilities, he was driven forth into retirement.

This selfish and interested policy was now to be put into practice with regard to Pulteney. The jealousy of Walpole would not permit him to offer office to his former friend, for such a colleague might prove more dangerous than useful. Yet Pulteney, in opposition, would also be a formidable antagonist. To compromise matters, a peerage was offered him. Pulteney, who knew that a coronet was but a bait to withdraw him from the House of

Commons, indignantly declined the proposal. At last, after waiting for some time in sullen expectancy, the inferior post of Cofferer of the Household was laid before him. It was accepted, in the hope of leading to further advancement. But promotion never coming, Pulteney, mortified and tired of waiting, openly attacked Walpole in a debate upon the debts of the Civil List. He was dismissed from his place as Cofferer at once, and went over to the Opposition. Shortly after this desertion, in union with Bolingbroke, he started a paper called the *Craftsman*, with the special object of writing down Walpole, and ruining his influence in the country.*

The malice of the Opposition gave, however, little annoyance to Walpole during the lifetime of George I. In an audience with the King Bolingbroke had endeavoured to seduce his Majesty into dismissing the powerful minister, but George had only laughed good-humouredly

* *Walpole.* "While I and you were cordial friends,
Alike our interest and our ends,
I thought my character and place
Secure, and dreaded no disgrace;
No statesman, sure, was more carest,
Or more in his good fortune blest."

Pulteney. "While I your other self was deem'd,
And worthy such renown esteem'd;
Ere great Newcastle won your heart,
And in your council took such part,
I was the happiest man in life,
And but with Tories had no strife."

* *Walpole.* "Newcastle, noble and polite,
Whom George approves, is my delight;
His loyal merit is his claim,
For him I'd hazard life and fame."

Pulteney. "Me, St. John now, whose every muse
And every grace adorns, subdues;
Attach'd to him, I've learnt to hate
Your person, politics, and state."

A Dialogue, in imitation of Horace, Ode ix. Book 3. "Gentleman's Magazine," 1733, p. 268.

and turned the conversation. Clever and spiteful as were the articles in the *Craftsman*, Walpole often replied to them with equal ability, nor had the victory been always with the aggressors. But now the hour when the Opposition was to triumph had arrived. The friend of Walpole had breathed his last at Osnaburgh, and the enemy of the minister was to reign in his stead. The hated Walpole was to bite the dust, whilst those who had braved the anger of the late sovereign were to reap their reward. Great was the delight of Bolingbroke and Pulteney when the news reached London that the first English King of the House of Hanover was no more, and that their host of Leicester Fields and of Richmond Lodge had been called to the throne. Revenge, so long looked for, was at last to be satisfied. The Opposition consisted of the Tories under Sir William Wyndham, of the Jacobites under Shippen, and of the disaffected Whigs under Pulteney. It had been the dream of Bolingbroke, whilst farming his lands at Dawley, to form a coalition between these parties, and lead them on to victory. The moment he deemed had now arrived.

On receiving the intelligence of the death of the King, Walpole posted to Richmond Lodge, to inform the Prince of the event. At first his Royal Highness refused to believe in the veracity of such agreeable information. "Dat is von big lie," he cried out to the minister who had come to do him homage, and, angry at the hoax he believed had been played upon him, was about to return to the bed from which he had been aroused. Walpole assured him of the truth of the statement, and to corroborate his words produced a letter from Townshend giving an account of the demise of the late sovereign. The Prince, no longer

incredulous, received the minister's expressions of loyalty with marked coldness. Walpole now begged to know whom his Majesty desired to draw up the Declaration for the Privy Council. "Compton," replied the King brusquely, and passed into his room.

The repulse was mortifying, but Walpole, conscious of the resources within him, did not despair. "I shall certainly go out," said he to one of his colleagues, "but let me advise you not to go into violent opposition, as we must soon come in again." The prophecy was soon to be fulfilled. Sir Spencer Compton, the Speaker of the House of Commons, a man of high character but of limited capacity, was certainly no formidable rival in the eyes of the minister whose downfall was so confidently predicted. Indeed Compton was so puzzled how to compose the necessary document for the Privy Council that he was forced to have recourse to the very man whom he was about to succeed. Walpole, whose ambition was above a petty triumph, good-naturedly took up his pen and at once wrote out the required Declaration, which was handed to the King.

The contrast between the man who had been minister to the first George and he who was to be the adviser of the present monarch was not lost upon one who was no poor student of human nature. Caroline of Anspach, the wife of George II., was cast in a very different intellectual mould to her husband. A woman of great tact, a keen observer of character, of a high spirit, well read in the literature of her day, and endowed with considerable powers of pleasing, she was no mean ally or feeble enemy to an ambitious statesman. Conscious of her superior parts, she counselled her lord and master, to whom she was devotedly attached, on every occasion;

but with the tact of her sex she ruled without appearing to rule. So clever was she in the management of her husband that George, who never entered upon any state policy without first asking the advice of Caroline, always remained under the flattering impression that it was he who invariably suggested the ideas that were adopted. In this delusion he was always carefully encouraged by his wife. So completely was he under her influence that no minister felt certain of the King's conduct in any matter until it had met with the sanction or the disapproval of the Queen. Yet, with an amusing blindness to his own weakness, the second George had the greatest contempt for men who allowed themselves to be ruled by their wives. He piqued himself upon his marital supremacy and his noble independence. He laughed at Charles I. for being under the thumb of his consort. He pitied Charles II. for being governed by his mistresses. He sneered at James II. for being ruled by his priests; at Anne for being guided by her favourites; and at his father for being under the control of his ministers. Then he would end his lament by the defiant question—"But who governs now?" The courtiers were too well bred to make reply, but the lower orders were not so polite. A wag from their class sang:

> "You may strut, dapper George, but 'twill all be in vain,
> We know 'tis Queen Caroline, not you that reign—
> You govern no more than Don Philip of Spain.
> Then if you would have us fall down and adore you,
> Lock up your fat spouse as your dad did before you." *

So astute a man as Walpole was not blind to what indeed was obvious to all. He made no efforts to obtain the regard of the King, but at once paid the most

* "Lives of the Queens of Hanover," by Dr. Doran, vol. ii. p. 185.

diligent court to the Queen. In course of conversation with Compton he learnt that on the first meeting of Parliament the in-coming minister would propose an allowance of £60,000 to be made to the Queen. "I will make it £40,000 more," said Walpole to a friend of Caroline, "if my office of minister be secured me." Her Majesty, whose soul was not above gain, readily closed with the bribe. "She would use her influence with her husband to retain the First Lord in power," was her reply. Walpole was fully satisfied with the answer, for well he knew that the Queen on his side signified victory. It required but her usual diplomacy for Caroline to convince the King that Compton was a silly uninfluential person, whilst Walpole was all-powerful and could make the House of Commons obedient to his every command. "And the House of Commons," added her Majesty, "means the purse of the nation."

The arguments of the Queen were opportunely strengthened by the arrival of an unexpected ally. At Paris Horace Walpole had been much troubled by the new turn of events. The Jacobites around him were loud in their predictions that a revolution would break out in England, that the two branches of the House of Bourbon would now be reconciled, that Spain would support the cause of the Pretender, and that France would withdraw from her recent alliances with her old enemy. To ascertain the truth of these reports Horace at once called upon Cardinal Fleury, who was then with the King at Rambouillet. The fears of the English Ambassador were soon dispelled. His Eminence assured him that the rumours flying about were utterly unfounded; that France would not advocate the cause of the Stuarts, that she was anxious to preserve the

friendship of Great Britain, and that she was determined upon remaining faithful to all the engagements she had entered into. Horace returned to the embassy delighted. He was on the point of dispatching a messenger to London with the news when a letter was brought in to him. It was from the Cardinal. After reflecting upon the conversation that had passed between them, his Eminence was of opinion that the English Ambassador should start immediately for London, and seek an interview with the King. "*Votre Excellence*," ran the epistle, "*en fera plus en un ou deux jours de conversation qu'elle ne le pourrait en des volumes de lettres, et vous pourrez régler avec Sa Majesté Britannique tout ce qui peut regarder les intérêts communs des alliés de Hanovre. Je ne doute pas que de la manière dont Votre Excellence m'a parlé de votre nouveau roi, il ne suive les mêmes principes et le même système du roi son père. Pour nous, Votre Excellence peut assurer Sa Majesté Britannique que nous ne nous en départirons pas et que notre sûreté réciproque consiste à demeurer bien unis.*"

The advice was immediately acted upon, and in a few hours Horace was craving audience at Leicester Fields. The King received him coldly, and expressed himself as exceedingly surprised that his representative should have quitted his post without permission. To explain the cause of his departure Horace now handed to the King the Cardinal's letter. It was read, and the cloud soon lifted from the royal brow. A long conversation ensued between his Majesty and the envoy. Horace took the opportunity to lay before the King the hopes of the Tories, the designs of the Jacobites, and the necessity of one who was a friend of Cardinal Fleury being placed at the head of the English embassy at Paris. George fully agreed with him, and

resolved that neither of the brothers should be removed from their respective posts. Horace should remain at Paris, and Sir Robert continue at the Treasury. Two such faithful and useful servants could not easily be replaced. With the one his foreign policy would be safe, with the other his domestic embarrassments would be relieved.*

The day after arriving at this resolution their Majesties held a reception. The rooms were crowded. Compton, the rising sun, was surrounded by friends anxious for future favours. Walpole, on the other hand, was deserted. "My mother," writes Horace Walpole, the pleasantest of letter-writers, and nephew of his namesake, the ambassador, "among the rest, who, Sir Spencer Compton's designation, and not his evaporation, being known, could not make her way between the scornful backs and elbows of her late devotees, nor could approach nearer to the Queen than the third or fourth row; but no sooner was she descried by her Majesty than the Queen said aloud, 'There, I am sure I see a friend!' Room was instantly made by the toadies around for the unexpected favourite. 'As I came away,' said Lady Walpole, 'I might have walked over their heads, had I pleased.'"

The "evaporation" of Compton was soon effected. In spite of the hopes of the Jacobites and the predictions of the discontented, Walpole remained at the head of affairs. "Sir Robert is the Queen's minister," writes Lord Hervey; "whoever he favours she distinguishes, and whoever she distinguishes the King employs." The statement was correct. Walpole was now as powerful under the son as he had been under the sire. All his measures were approved of; all his nominations appointed. The Duke of

* "Walpole à la Cour de France," par le Comte de Baillon, pp. 285—290.

Newcastle, whom the King had stigmatized, and not without reason, as "an impertinent fool," was reinstated in his post as Secretary of State. Lord Townshend, whom the King had called, in the days when he was Prince, "a choleric blockhead," continued in office. Horace Walpole, who had been abused as "a scoundrel," a "fool," and a "dirty buffoon," was, as we have seen, reappointed to the English embassy at Paris. With but few exceptions the Ministry, to the anger and mortification of the discontented Whigs and the expectant Tories, remained unaltered. Nor had the King any reason to regret that he had broken off from his old friends and allied himself with those of his father. Through the influence of Walpole, the House of Commons had agreed to settle £100,000 upon the Queen, whilst the income of the King was increased by some £130,000. It was not without good and substantial grounds that Caroline had preferred Sir Robert to Sir Spencer.

But the Opposition, though defeated in their schemes, had no intention of calmly submitting to the superiority of Walpole. Scarcely had the new House of Commons assembled than Pulteney sounded the war-cry. Horace Walpole, who had been summoned from Paris to defend the foreign policy of the Government, rose up and proposed that some £300,000 should be granted for the maintenance of 12,000 Hessians in the British pay. There was no real reason why the country should be burdened with this un-English charge, and the leaders of the Opposition made the most of their opportunity. Pulteney strongly denounced the measure. He said that if Hessian troops had been raised during the Rebellion of 1715 no such excuse now existed, for the country was internally at

peace, and not apprehensive of a second Jacobite insurrection. He had no doubt that Hessians in the pay of England might be of advantage to Hanover, but he failed to see the good that could accrue to British interests from such a step. Surely Englishmen were numerous enough, were brave enough, and were willing enough to defend their country without calling in the aid of foreign troops? Such men were kept on a war footing, not to protect the interests of England, but the interests of Hanover, and he opposed the charge as un-English, unconstitutional, and unnecessary. Sir William Wyndham followed in the same strain. In reply, it was argued that the late King had provided these troops in order to enforce the Treaty of Hanover; that they were ready at hand, and cheaper than national troops; that as the King of Prussia, one of the contracting parties to the alliance, had chosen to withdraw from his obligations, it was prudent to retain the foreign legion in our pay, and that it was unwise to have them disbanded until the proceedings at the congress at Cambray were concluded. The House, completely under the influence of Walpole, agreed to this view of the question, and the grant was passed by a large majority.

The next attack of the Opposition was more awkward to repel. Having failed to show that the public expenditure had scandalously increased under the administration of Walpole, Pulteney moved the House to call for an inquiry into the disbursement of the Secret Service money. A sum of £250,000 had been charged for Secret Service, and he for one desired to know how so large an amount could be accounted for. He objected to the words Secret Service. He was averse to this loose and vague fashion of accounting for public money, however con-

venient it might be to cover embezzlements and screen corrupt and rapacious ministers. Walpole rose up to reply. He said that a strict account of the disbursements could not be given without manifest prejudice to the public, and he was proceeding in the usual strain of platitudes and excuses adopted on such occasions, when the arrival of unexpected news enabled him cleverly to extricate himself from his embarrassing position.

On hearing of the death of George I., the King of Spain, in anticipation of the renewal of Jacobite intrigues and of Walpole's downfall, determined to cancel the promise he had made at Vienna. He carried his resolve into effect. But finding that Walpole still continued at the head of affairs, that the Jacobites did not rise, and that France was still the ally of England, he thought it wiser to reconsider his decision. From his palace he issued what is known as the Act of the Pardo, accepting the preliminaries he had formerly pledged himself to observe, and referring further difficulties to a congress to be held at Soissons. It was this intelligence which was now brought to the ears of Walpole in the midst of his speech on the Secret Service. He at once turned it to good account. Informing the House of the happy news, he said that "the nation would be now relieved from the burden of the late expenses, and that he could assure the members who called so loudly for a specification of the Secret Service money that it had been expended in obtaining the conclusion of that peace the preliminaries of which were now signed. The designs of those who had laboured to disturb the tranquillity of Europe were thus defeated; and the purchase of peace and the prevention of war on terms so cheap were highly beneficial to the public." The House was so delighted

with this intelligence that it did not think it worth while to criticize the truth of the minister's statement or to continue the inquiry, and the matter dropped.

Finding that on all points of domestic finance they were overmatched by the superior knowledge and ready *finesse* of Walpole, the Opposition now turned their attention to foreign matters. Ever since the conquest of Gibraltar the subject had been a source of endless bitterness and dispute between England and Spain. The Spaniards were wounded to the quick at seeing a portion of their own territory in the hands of an enemy, whilst the English were divided in opinion as to the advantage or disadvantage of possessing "the Rock." Stanhope, when a diplomatist, was the first to propose that Gibraltar should be restored to Spain, provided that a reasonable equivalent were offered in exchange. He said that the fortress was a useless charge, that its garrison was the cause of an increase in our standing army, and that, except Minorca, which was perfectly capable of defending itself, there was no English possession in the Mediterranean to protect.* When he came into power the subject of the restoration was discussed, opposed, supported, and almost carried into effect, but fell through owing to the greed of Spain, who wished to obtain Gibraltar without giving any equivalent in return.

On the accession of Townshend to office the cession of Gibraltar was again under discussion. A congress was being held at Cambray for the purpose of making peace. But Spain declined to accede to any terms unless Gibraltar

* In 1782, under the Administration of the Earl of Shelburne, the question was again brought up. Shelburne was in favour of yielding Gibraltar to the Spaniards, receiving in return Porto Rico or some other West India island. The exchange was warmly opposed by several members of the Cabinet and by Pitt.

was restored to her. Nay, more, she refused to proceed with the conference unless she received a letter from the King of England promising to restore the fortress at some future date. Thus pressed, Townshend, and with him his colleague Carteret, advised the King to write the desired epistle. Accordingly on the 20th April, 1721, George I. sent a dispatch to the King of Spain stating his readiness "to satisfy you with regard to the restitution of Gibraltar upon the footing of an equivalent, promising you to make use of the first favourable opportunity to regulate this article with consent of my Parliament." The Court of Madrid, however, raised so many objections to the term "equivalent" that a second letter was written by the King of England, omitting the word, but carefully maintaining the condition that the consent of Parliament was necessary to complete the transaction. Still Spain was not satisfied; she required the immediate restitution of the fortress. The answer was returned that until Parliament had assembled and expressed its views on the matter such a proceeding was impossible. Spain declined to wait; she declared war, attacked Gibraltar, found herself alone in enmity against England, and then, as we have said, thought it prudent to sign the Act of the Pardo.

The Gibraltar question soon came on before the House. The Opposition had heard of the letter written by the late King offering to cede the fortress, and saw their opportunity to worry the Government. Loud were their denunciations at the very idea that the fortress should ever have been proposed to be restored to Spain (though some of their leaders a few years ago had advocated its restitution); but still louder were their protestations when they learnt that the Ministry had pledged the word of the

late King to cede Gibraltar, and that the royal word had been broken. Early in February, 1727, one Samuel Sandys (afterwards Chancellor of the Exchequer) in a full House moved that the letter of the late King offering to restore Gibraltar be laid on the table. He was warmly supported by Pulteney and Wyndham. Walpole replied. He said that it was perfectly true that his late Majesty had promised to surrender Gibraltar, but such promise had been strictly conditional. The conditions were that Spain should offer an equivalent for the restoration of the fortress, and the terms be approved of by Parliament. Spain had declined to offer an equivalent, therefore the matter was at an end, and the royal word not broken, for the conditions under which the royal word had been pledged had not been fulfilled. The honourable gentlemen opposite were in error in supposing that his late Majesty had given a promise unconditionally—the promise was conditional on the offer of an equivalent, and on the consent of Parliament being obtained—therefore their strictures against the Government fell to the ground. With regard to the request that the late King's letter be produced, he had to say that the question was unconstitutional and in bad taste, for he held that the private correspondence of princes was almost as sacred as their persons.

In the House of Commons the reply of Walpole was regarded as perfectly satisfactory, and the motion of Sandys rejected by a large majority. But in the Upper House this servility was not so apparent. On the Gibraltar debate the Opposition moved that "effectual care be taken in any treaty that the King of Spain do renounce all claim to Gibraltar and Minorca in plain and strong terms." This was supported by another resolution, which was

communicated to the Commons, that "the House relies upon his Majesty for preserving his undoubted right to Gibraltar and Minorca." The Government, now alive to the importance of having this question definitely settled, sent to Spain Colonel Stanhope, a practised diplomatist, who had formerly been ambassador at Madrid. The result of his mission, after numerous delays needless to mention, was the famous Treaty of Seville. By this treaty a defensive alliance was concluded between England, Spain, and France; the English trade was re-established with America; various stipulations were entered into with other countries, and all Spanish claims to Gibraltar indirectly renounced.*

For the part he played on this occasion—his tact in soothing Spanish pride whilst enforcing English demands—Colonel Stanhope was raised to the peerage as Lord Harrington. He was soon to be elevated to a higher honour. For some time past the friendship that had formerly existed between Townshend and Walpole had changed into a feeling of jealous and irritable coldness. When two men, each inordinately fond of power, each struggling for supremacy, and each desiring to be the exclusive recipient of royal favour, are found occupying the highest positions in the Cabinet, it becomes only a question of time and opportunity for the one to triumph over the other. And on this occasion both social and official matters were at work to widen the estrangement. Until of late years Townshend had been the most prominent personage in Norfolk. He was the only landowner in the county who was a peer of the realm. His property

* Coxe's "Life of Walpole." Stanhope's "History of England," vol. ii. pp. 198—204. "Walpole à la Cour de France," par Baillon.

was large, his mansion at Rainham was noted as much for its architectural beauties as for its generous and frequent hospitalities, and in all local matters he took the lead. Thus within his shire Townshend had received the homage, exacted the authority, and dispensed the favours of a petty monarch.

But during the last decade his brother-in-law, Walpole, had been rapidly encroaching upon this social despotism. Office, with its opportunities and emoluments, had made the Squire of Houghton a wealthy man.* Fond of art and no mean judge of paintings, Walpole had occupied his

* Walpole was, however, never the comparatively poor man he has been represented to be at the beginning of his career. The late Hon. Frederick Walpole told me that Coxe, in his estimate of Walpole's income, had greatly underrated both the extent of the Norfolk property and the rental derived from it. Had Mr. F. Walpole lived he was going to furnish me with facts to support this statement.

Among the family papers of the Marquess of Cholmondeley, the lineal descendant of Sir Robert Walpole, there is a curious book of accounts relating to the receipts and expenditure of Walpole from Aug. 3, 1714, to Aug. 30, 1718.† The accounts are kept by Robert Mann, undoubtedly the Mann of the forage contract affair, and on the last page are the signatures of Mann and Walpole as witnesses to the authenticity of the entries. During these four years Walpole is credited, what with the money he received and the sums he paid away, with the total of £152,473 2s. I give some of the more important entries:—

		£	s.	d.
Mar. 7, 1715.	Paid your Honour in Land Tax Tallys .	5,000	0	0
June 9, 1716.	Paid your Honour in full of a bond, principal and interest	1,095	0	0
June 28 „	Paid to your Honour in class and lottery orders of 1712 and 1714 . . .	2,760	15	5
July 3 „	Paid to your Honour in class of your lottery, 1712	1,945	11	2
Aug. 21 „	Paid to your Honour per the purchase of Bank Annuities	2,425	0	0
Sept. 27 „	Paid to James Craggs, Esq., for five thousand pounds Bank Annuities . .	4,960	0	0
Dec. 4 „	Paid Mr. Henry Parsons for five thousand and twelve pounds victualling bills at 5 per cent. discount	4,761	12	0
Jan. 16, 1717.	Paid Francis Hawes, Esq., for malt orders and tallys of the year 1714 . . .	10,381	1	11

† I am indebted to his Lordship for kindly lending me this account-book.

leisure in filling the galleries of his mansion with rare and splendid pictures. He had added, too, to the paternal

			£	s.	d.
Jan. 26, 1717.		Paid for £10,000 capital stock in the East India Company at 166¼ and 166½ per cent. per order	16,642	10	0
Mar. 30	„	Paid the money your Honour lent me on my bond	3,000	0	0
Mar. 18	„	Paid to Mr. Jacomb, being money borrowed Mar. 23 last, part principal and interest	5,025	13	6
May 3	„	Paid F. Hawes, Esq., money borrowed on malt, 1715, per your Honour's order, principal and interest	8,047	2	5
May 24	„	Paid for £2,000 Bank Annuities at 102⅝ and 103¼, brokerage included . . .	2,058	15	0
May 24	„	Paid for two thousand pounds lottery blanks of 1714	2,062	4	1
July 4	„	Paid Lord Townshend in full of a note under your Honour's hand	1,100	0	0
Dec. 19	„	Paid Mr. F. Hawes	2,000	0	0
Feb. 1, 1718.		Paid for £2,500 East India Stock at 209 and 208¾ per cent.	5,226	17	6
Feb. 15	„	Paid Mr. F. Hawes	5,300	0	0
May 15	„	Paid Mr. Jacomb	7,000	0	0
June 20	„	Paid to your Honour by my bond . .	3,000	0	0
„	„	„ in Bank bills . .	4,000	0	0

What are these entries? Whether they can bear any sinister interpretation, or whether Walpole simply in the same ledger inserted his official as well as his domestic accounts, I know not. Among the entries are numerous payments of sums varying from £100 to £600 to different persons. A few of the statements relating to the domestic expenditure are interesting:—

Aug. 26, 1714.		Paid for gloves, hattband, buckles, and button	0	6	9
„	„	Paid by your order for a brocade waistcoat	11	0	0
Sept. 27	„	Paid for 12 pair of cambric ruffles . .	2	9	0
Mar. 24, 1715.		Paid for a pound of Bohea tea for your own use	1	6	0
May 16	„	Paid for a Parrowquett for your lady . .	2	5	0
May 25	„	Paid for a pound of green tea for your lady .	0	18	0
„	„	Paid for 20 flower potts for your garden at Chelsea	3	1	0
Aug. 27	„	Paid to your lady for silk bonnet of Mrs. Ludlow	6	0	0
„	„	Paid to your lady for tickets in a lottery .	2	10	0
Oct. 1	„	Paid Mrs. Nezcraw 6 months' board and schooling for Miss Kitty and Miss Molly Walpole	30	0	0
Oct. 6	„	Paid for muslin for 18 of neckcloths for your Honour	7	0	0

acres by the purchase of various outlying lands, so that his estate stood now in no mean comparison with the property of Rainham. Passionately devoted to sport, the possessor of as fine shooting as the county boasted, a genial and most open-handed host, it is no matter for surprise that Walpole made his country-house one of the most popular and agreeable in the kingdom.

Townshend was a man of hot temper, kind-hearted but peevish, of stainless morals, a man whose motives were as upright as his actions, and yet, in spite of his numerous high and good qualities, he was not much liked. His views on all subjects were narrow and prejudiced, his intellect was sluggish, he had been so long accustomed to play the master that even in his friendship there was something patronising and repellant. Though sprung from an old Norfolk stock, he had little taste for sport. The most liberal of hosts, men of the world felt not quite at ease in his presence—his sobriety checked their conviviality; his austerity hushed their stories—he was so correct that though they respected him he bored them. Then he was a widower, and no charming hostess brightened with her presence the cold formal saloons of Rainham.

At Houghton a very different régime reigned. Walpole was a man of the most perfect temper; he believed in no man's honour, and in no woman's virtue—a creed which

			£	s.	d.
Apr. 26,	1716.	Paid to your lady at her going to Bath, in money 30 guineas and in Bank notes £70, together	102	5	0
May 16	,,	Paid Mr. Story, gardener at Chelsea . .	98	0	0
June 2	,,	Paid Col. Churchill for a bay gelding . .	50	0	0
Dec. 9,	1717.	Paid Mr. Bland for Master Robert and Neddy's board at Eaton school . .	30	0	0

There are also numerous entries of lemons and of gallons of arrack sent to Houghton.

saved him from a good deal of disappointment—yet his cynicism rendered him neither gloomy nor sarcastic. He took life as he found it, not being crushed by failure or intoxicated by success, and was always of opinion that most evils found their antidote in the practice of the Epicurean philosophy. He was fond of the pleasures of the table; he drank deeply; and like his royal master he was attached, not wisely but too well, to the society of the fair sex. No man was a better *raconteur*, only his stories were so naughty that they should never have been repeated, and none could be a more humorous and amusing companion. At Rainham the host was a dull anchorite; at Houghton he was a hard-riding, hard-drinking squire, who delighted to keep open house and entertain his friends in a free jovial style, as his father had before him. Yet it was impossible to confound Walpole with the rude boorish Westerns of his day. In spite of his vicious propensities and boisterous conviviality, it was plain to see in him the man of clear sound intellect, shrewd common sense, and fertile in ideas. Thus his society was both amusing and improving; and since the partner of his joys was, if we are to credit the gossip of the times, a vivacious coquette, it is not surprising that, as Walpole rose higher in favour at the Court and became the presiding genius of the House of Commons, the hospitalities of Houghton should have overshadowed those of Rainham.

Nor was the political influence of its owner a whit less predominant. When the brothers undertook office on the fall of Stanhope, Townshend was not only nominally but in reality the head of the Cabinet. This superiority, however, scarcely lasted the first session. It was evident to all who watched the power which Walpole wielded in the Lower

House, and the great intellectual ability he displayed on all occasions, that the firm would speedily have to change its title, and become Walpole and Townshend in lieu of Townshend and Walpole. This was apparent to George I., who invariably treated Walpole as the chief adviser of the Crown. On the accession of George II., Caroline soon perceived the difference between the brother ministers, and gave all her support to the First Lord of the Treasury. Townshend, jealous of this preference, and smarting under the constant objections raised by Walpole against his suggestions, resolved to make a struggle to regain his supremacy. He attempted to form a new administration. His dislike of his colleague the Duke of Newcastle was as bitter as his dislike of Walpole, and he schemed for the overthrow of the Duke and the installation of the Earl of Chesterfield as Secretary of State. To obtain his ends he pursued the same tactics as Carteret had formerly adopted; he tried to ingratiate himself with the sovereign, approved of his foreign policy, accompanied him to Hanover, and flattered him to the top of his bent. So well had he succeeded that the King had almost given his consent to the promotion of Lord Chesterfield.

But the smoothness of the run of this intrigue was now to meet with an interruption. Walpole was not blind to the course his brother-in-law was adopting, and his anger rose as its details became unfolded to him. Caroline, who was no friend to Townshend, took the part of the First Lord of the Treasury and checkmated the moves of the plotting Secretary of State. When the name of Chesterfield was mentioned to her by the King to succeed Newcastle, she opposed the appointment with all her usual tact and diplomacy, and the result of her interference was

that his Grace was not removed from office. Frequent conversations now ensued between the Queen and Walpole as to the course best to defeat the machinations of Townshend.

Returning from the Palace after one of these conferences, Walpole called upon Colonel Selwyn at Cleveland Court. Talking to Mrs. Selwyn was Townshend, and in the room were the Duke of Newcastle and his brother Mr. Pelham. The conversation turned upon a question of foreign politics, which Walpole had advised should be abandoned. Townshend, disapproving of this suggestion of his colleague, recommended that the House of Commons should be informed of the nature of the measure, and be told that it had fallen through at the instigation of the First Lord of the Treasury. Walpole replied somewhat shortly that such a proceeding was inexpedient, and only calculated to give unnecessary trouble. To this Townshend hotly answered, "Since you object, and the House of Commons is your concern more than mine, I shall not persist in my opinion; but, as I now give way, I cannot avoid observing that, upon my honour, I think that mode of proceeding would have been most advisable." Walpole, whose rage had long been smouldering against Townshend and only wanted the slightest provocation to break out, said in his most scornful tones, "My Lord, for once there is no man's sincerity which I doubt so much as your Lordship's; and I never doubted it so much as when you are pleased to make such strong professions."

The choleric temper of Townshend was unable to brook this taunt, and, forgetful that Mrs. Selwyn was in the room, he rushed forward, seized Walpole by his collar, and biography has to record that these two distinguished men were not ashamed to resent their wrongs by a personal

struggle, which might have been approved of by the frequenters of a village taproom, but which was certainly out of place when we remember the high position of the combatants, and that the scene was laid in the house of a friend and in the presence of a lady. When the scuffle had ended, the rival ministers laid their hands on their swords, and prepared for an immediate duel. Mrs. Selwyn, in terror, was on the point of summoning the guards, but was prevented by Mr. Pelham. Happily, the friends now interposed (indeed one is surprised that they did not interfere sooner), and a cold and hollow reconciliation between the two was effected—but neither ever forgot that day, and the bitterness with which it was remembered endured in the minds of both to the last.

After this unseemly scene matters soon came to a crisis. Townshend had advised the King to act contrary to the suggestions of the Duke of Newcastle with respect to hostilities against the Emperor. The King was on the point of carrying out Townshend's views, when Walpole, through the influence of Queen Caroline, interfered, and the course approved of by the Duke of Newcastle was adopted. The Lord of Rainham, finding that he was unable to be the victor in the struggle, and that his influence over the King was always thwarted by the Queen and Walpole, her confidential adviser, sent in his resignation and withdrew from public life. He was succeeded by the newly created Lord Harrington. In his letters to his most intimate friends, explaining the motives of his resignation, Townshend gives as his reason the delicate state of his health, but hints at the same time that his estrangement from his brother-in-law had something to do with the matter. Thus he writes *

* "Townshend Papers," May 12, 1730. Coxe.

to Mons. de Bousset: "*La longue et pénible maladie que j'ai eu il y a presque quatre ans, m'a tellement affaiblie la constitution du corps, que j'en ai ressenti de temps en temps depuis les terribles secousses. Cette diminution des forces m'ayant rendu moins capable de soutenir le grand faix des affaires, j'ai été obligé de songer à la retraite. Et en ayant demandé la permission au Roy, Sa Majesté a eu la bonté de me l'accorder de la manière la plus gracieuse du monde. Ainsi d'abord que les séances du parlement seront finies je me demettrai de ma charge, et me retirerai à ma campagne, pour soigner ma santé, et jouir un peu de repos après les grandes fatigues que j'ai essuyées. Votre Excellence entendra peut-être quelques autres raisons de ma démission, mais mes fréquentes indispositions m'en ont inspirée la première pensée. Cependant j'avouerai à Votre Excellence que quelques dégoûts que j'ai eus par rapport au Chevalier Walpole ont beaucoup fortifié cette résolution.*"

To the honour of Townshend be it said that he never sought, as so many disappointed statesmen have sought, to regain his lost power by a vindictive and factious course of opposition. When his friend Chesterfield was bitterly attacking the power of Walpole, he desired the ex-minister to reoccupy his seat in the House of Lords, and unite with the foes of the Government. Townshend declined. He had formed, he said, a resolution, which he could not break, of never again engaging in political contests. "I recollect," he said, "that Lord Cowper, though a stanch Whig, had been betrayed by personal pique and party resentment, in his opposition to the Ministry, to throw himself into the arms of the Tories, and even to support principles which tended to serve the cause of the Jacobites. I know that I am extremely warm; and I am apprehensive

if I should attend the House of Lords, I also may be hurried away by the impetuosity of my temper, and by personal resentment, to adopt a line of conduct which in my cooler moments I may regret."

He spent the closing years of his life in agricultural pursuits. He died in 1738, at the age of sixty-four.

The resignation of Townshend was soon followed by the recall of Horace Walpole from Paris. The results of the Treaty of Seville had tended to alter the position of England with regard to foreign politics. Spain and France had now been reconciled, and Sir Robert Walpole, looking with his usual keen scrutiny into the future, saw how desirable it was to have Austria as a friend and no longer as a foe. Up to the present moment the friendship with France had been of the greatest service. It had checked the encroachments of Spain, it had crippled the efforts of the Jacobites, and had driven the Pretender across the Alps. But now matters had changed. The House of Hanover was firmly established on the throne, there was little to fear from the adherents of the Stuarts, and peace was necessary for the carrying on of our vast foreign trade. In addition to this, France, our recent ally, but ancient enemy, was showing signs of returning to her former Continental policy. Morville, the friend of England, had been dismissed from his post as Secretary of State, and Chauvelin, the enemy of England, who entertained too a personal dislike to Horace Walpole, ruled as his successor. Now that France and Spain were on terms of amity, Cardinal Fleury, who was completely under the influence of Chauvelin, recognised that the interests of France and England were no longer identical, and the old jealousy between the two countries began to spring up. Horace Walpole, fully

alive to the change of sentiment, felt that his mission was over, and begged to be recalled. His request was granted, and Lord Waldegrave, at the instigation of Horace, was sent over to Paris to take charge of the embassy. Negotiations were now set on foot with Vienna, and after much deliberation a second treaty was signed between England and the Empire. By this treaty England agreed to guarantee the Emperor's succession according to the Pragmatic sanction, whilst the Empire consented to abolish the Ostend Company, and to secure the succession of Don Carlos to Parma and Tuscany.

Domestic affairs, however, began now to fully occupy the time of Walpole. For the first few months after the ratification of the second Treaty of Vienna, little of note had engaged the attention of the First Lord of the Treasury. He was supreme in the Cabinet; his voice was all-powerful at Court; the House of Commons was obedient to his orders; and the country was at peace with Europe. This leisure was spent by Sir Robert in dispensing stately hospitalities to certain of the House of Austria then visiting England, in superintending his improvements at Houghton, and in strengthening his already formidable majority by propitiating the landed gentry and the trading classes by certain financial reforms.

On the 17th January, 1733, the sixth session of the third Septennial Parliament was opened—the most memorable of all the parliaments that Walpole had sat in. Before the meeting of the Houses the Prime Minister had become painfully conscious that unless some new measure should be adopted, or some new tax introduced, the public expenditure would exceed its income. In this extremity he proposed to take half a million from the Sinking Fund.

It may be remembered that when the Act passed by the House of Commons establishing a fund (afterwards called the Sinking Fund) for applying the surplus on duties and revenues to the liquidation of the National Debt, it was expressly laid down that such surplus should never be appropriated to any other use, intent, or purpose whatsoever. This rule, though occasionally indirectly evaded, had never been directly infringed. The proposal of Walpole was therefore an excellent opportunity for the hostility of the Opposition. The Patriots, for so the enemies of the Government styled themselves—men out of office, and ravenous to return, always have some fine name as a mask for their selfish warfare—were most virtuous in their denunciations. Only a case of the direst necessity could justify such an encroachment! It was robbing posterity to the extent of five hundred thousand pounds! "The author of such an expedient," cried Sir John Barnard, the member for London, and one of the weightiest as well as one of the most honest members of the Opposition, "must expect the curses of posterity." Walpole was reminded that the Sinking Fund was his own project, and taunted with his inconsistency. "The right honourable gentleman," exclaimed Pulteney, "had once the vanity to call himself the father of the Sinking Fund; but, if Solomon's judgment was right, he who is thus for splitting and dividing the child can never be deemed to be the real father."

Confident in his majority, Walpole remained unmoved. He said that it was necessary for the landed interest to be relieved, and that, provided this half million was allowed him, the Land Tax would continue at one shilling in the pound, but if this motion were objected to—and here the country squires looked anxious—he should

propose that the Land Tax be raised to two shillings in the pound, as in no other way could he provide for the current expenses. It was perfectly true, he admitted, that the Sinking Fund was established to pay off the National Debt, still it was subject to the disposal of Parliament, and whenever it appeared, as it now appeared, that it could be more properly applied to some other use the Legislature had the power to dispose of it as it thought best. His arguments prevailed; the threat of raising the Land Tax was sufficient to alarm the squirarchy, who cared much for present advantages and little for the evils in store for posterity; whilst the political hirelings voted as they were ordered. The Opposition was defeated by a majority of 110. The thin end of the wedge thus introduced was soon followed by the destruction of what the Patriots called "the sacred deposit." To borrow from the Sinking Fund was such a convenient fashion of raising supplies that the act could not fail to be repeated. In the next year the whole produce of the fund was appropriated, and in the two following years the fund was mortgaged and alienated. "Our debts," writes Earl Stanhope, "were always augmented in moments of difficulty, never diminished in a period of peace, until the Sinking Fund was restored in a different era, and on a new foundation, by the genius and integrity of Pitt." *

* "History of England," vol. ii. p. 240.

In spite of the genius and integrity of Pitt there are many who doubt whether his Sinking Fund was a whit more beneficial to the country than the one introduced by Walpole. Lord Grenville, who had been most active in assisting Pitt in the establishment of the measure, afterwards candidly admitted its inutility. Lord Macaulay, in his sketch of the life of Pitt, writes upon it as follows: "Very idle apprehensions were generally entertained that the public debt, though much less than a third of the debt which we now bear with ease, would be found too heavy for the strength of the nation. Those apprehensions might not, perhaps, have been easily quieted by reason. But Pitt quieted them by a juggle. He succeeded in persuading first himself and then the whole nation, his opponents included, that a

In commenting upon this measure Archdeacon Coxe, though doing his best to vindicate the character of his hero, feels bound to condemn such infringement of the Sinking Fund as "a dark speck" upon Walpole's financial administration. Certainly, when we remember that Walpole was regarded as the great financier of his day, it seems at the first sight strange that he should have been unable to resort to some more masterly expedient to extricate the country from its embarrassments, than by appealing to the resources of the Sinking Fund. But on a deeper examination of the subject, we see how this proposition was only another instance of the clever but unscrupulous manner in which the First Lord of the Treasury maintained and strengthened his supremacy in the State.

The love of office, we have said, was the one darling ambition of Walpole; it engrossed all his thoughts and towered above his vices: any measure, whether right or wrong, that fortified his position he advocated and adopted; any measure, however necessary for the country's good, that placed his power in peril he shunned and refused to sanction. It is idle to suppose that a finance minister so fertile in resources and so thorough a master of his subject as Walpole could not have settled the current expenses of the year without having recourse to a scheme which the feeblest of Chancellors of the Exchequer would have declined to adopt. But in the eyes of Walpole it was not necessary that every measure he recommended should be either wise or judi-

new Sinking Fund, *which so far as it differed from former Sinking Funds differed for the worse*, would, by virtue of some mysterious power of propagation belonging to money, put into the pocket of the public creditor great sums not taken out of the pocket of the tax-payer. The country, terrified by a danger which was no danger, hailed with delight and boundless confidence a remedy which was no remedy."

cious, provided it was popular, pleased a powerful class, and added to the stability of his majority. That it should fulfil these conditions was all that he required. What more popular measure could he carry than to draw upon the Sinking Fund for the money he needed and keep the Land Tax low? It pleased all classes. In the House of Commons the landowners have always been a large and influential body—they are so still, in spite of Reform Bills, the growth of our manufacturing interests, and the representatives of education—but in the time of Walpole, save a few political adventurers, almost every member of the House was drawn from the ranks of the landed gentry. Either he was a squire or the representative of a powerful peer; in both cases he was sensitive where the taxation on land was concerned.

Aware how important it was to conciliate the landed gentry of the kingdom—who, from their local and exclusive views, had not rejoiced greatly at the accession of the House of Hanover—for the fox-hunting, narrow-minded squire of the eighteenth century looked upon a German in very much the same light as his descendant at the beginning of the nineteenth century looked upon a Frenchman—Walpole had gradually lowered the Land Tax first to three shillings in the pound, then to two shillings, and now he proposed that it should remain at one shilling in the pound. The consequence was that his administration was highly popular with the squirarchy—for History teaches us this, if it teaches us nothing else, that men, no matter what political opinions they profess to hold, always support a Government which benefits their own particular interests. The reduction of the Land Tax was the bitterest blow ever dealt by Walpole

against the designs of the Opposition. "Gentlemen may talk as they please," said Henry Pelham in the House of Commons, "of what was done in the last session of Parliament; but I can say that in all places where I have since been I have had the pleasure of receiving the thanks of the people for the ease given to the landed interest; and whatever gloss may now be put upon that affair, yet I know that some gentlemen, who appeared against it, were heard to say at the time that affair was mentioned, it will please the country too much, and therefore we must endeavour to render it abortive. I will indeed do the gentlemen the justice to believe that they then spoke as they thought; and they then did what they could to prevent the success of a design, by which his Majesty's administration had gained the favour and the esteem of the generality of the landholders in England." *

"Half the land tax taken off," cries M. Delafoye,† "and no more remaining than one shilling in the pound—which was never known before since the Revolution—must be popular in the country, let the Pulteneyans say what they will against it in the House, and must be of service in the next election!"

Nor was the city a whit less pleased with the measure than the country. The proprietors of the public debt were ever fearful that money out of the Sinking Fund would be thrown into their hands, whilst the Bank was making loans upon the land and malt duties at three per cent. In a pamphlet that Walpole himself wrote upon the subject‡ he alludes to this timidity. "The Sinking

* Chandler, vol. vii. p. 275, quoted from Coxe.

† "Waldegrave Papers," March 3, 1731. Coxe.

‡ "Some Considerations on the Public Funds," p. 66.

Fund," he says, "was now grown to a great maturity, produced annually about £1,200,000, and became almost a terror to all the individual proprietors of the public debts. The high state of credit, the low rate of interest, and the advanced price of the stocks and funds *above par* made the great moneyed companies, and all their proprietors, apprehend nothing more than being obliged to receive their principals too fast; and it became almost the universal consent of mankind, that a million a year was as much as the creditors of the public could bear to receive, in discharge of part of their principal."

The encroachment made by the minister himself on the hoards of the Sinking Fund removed this anxiety on the part of the capitalists, and his proposal therefore met with their thorough approval.

And in addition to the satisfaction evinced by the landed gentry and by the moneyed classes, the people generally were very well pleased that the expenses of the country should be carried on without a fresh call upon their purses. The imposition of a new tax is always unpopular; the alienation of a Sinking Fund cannot but be welcome. The one is an existing evil, the other an evil that has to be borne by the future. Human nature is so constituted as to prefer the misfortunes that may happen to posterity to those which may be experienced in the present. "To borrow, therefore, from the Sinking Fund," writes the author of the "Wealth of Nations," "is always an obvious expedient for raising supplies, and has never been known to create a national ferment." Acquainted with this platitude, Walpole passed his measure, thus creating national satisfaction and consolidating personal influence.

But the second financial proposal of the minister, though sound and far-sighted, and since adopted by his successors in power, was to meet with a far harsher reception. It had long been the wish of Walpole to effect a trenchant reform in the administration of the revenue, and, by the introduction of a well-balanced scheme, to relieve the landed interest, simplify and equalise the mode of taxation, and transform the island into a general free port and a common storehouse for all nations. All these advantages he believed would accrue to the country by satisfactorily dealing with the vexed and sensitive question of the *Excise*.

A few words as to the history of this hated tax. Excise duties were first imposed during the civil wars. The articles first taxed were beer, ale, cider, and perry, then meat and sugar were included, and shortly after the execution of the King the Excise laid its hand upon most of the commodities in general consumption. At the Restoration the Excise was reduced to its original limits, and all articles, save beer, ale, and cider, were freed from taxation. On the accession of James II. wine, vinegar, tobacco, and sugar came within the jurisdiction of the Excise, and had to pay duty. The immediate effects of the Revolution were to liberate most of the articles of general consumption from the control of the exciseman, but as it became necessary to raise money in defence of the religion and liberties of the country additional taxes had to be levied; excise on salt, on the distilleries, and on malt were then first introduced, whilst a further taxation was laid on beer. In the reign of William the sums raised by these duties reached nearly a million per annum. The cost of the war of the Spanish succession caused the Ministry to extend still further the operations of the Excise, and additional

duties were levied on various articles of consumption, till the one million under the rule of William had almost doubled itself under the rule of Anne. With the exception of a small duty on wrought plate no additional excise was demanded during the reign of George I. At the time when the subject began to be taken up by Walpole, thanks to the prosperity of the country and the progress of consumption, the annual amount raised by the Excise was over three millions.*

To the extension or continuation of the Excise the political economists of the time of Walpole were strongly opposed. They argued that because the real income of every country originates from the land, it therefore followed that all taxes should be imposed on landed property; and since all excises fall ultimately upon the land, it would be more just to introduce the poll tax and land tax instead of the Excise. This idea seemed the more plausible when it was found that in certain cases the excise had the effect of lowering the price of the article excised instead of raising the price of the produce. Thus the excise on malt resulted in sinking the price of barley instead of raising the value of beer. Sir William Wyndham declared in the House of Commons that it was "as demonstrable as any proposition in Euclid that if we actually paid a land tax of ten shillings in the pound without paying any other excises or duties, our liberties would be much more secure, and every landed gentleman might live at least in as much plenty and might make a better provision for his family, than under the present mode of taxation." And this declaration was supported

* Coxe. The difference between *customs* and *excise* is thus defined by Walpole: "Customs are duties paid by the merchant upon importation; excise duties payable by the retail trader upon consumption."

by a financial writer like Davenant and a philosopher like Locke.

Walpole, with his greater breadth of intellectual grasp, thought differently. He saw that in a commercial country like England, with its commerce daily increasing, it was absurd to talk of the whole income of the nation being drawn from the soil; yet even if such were the case a greater revenue could be raised by the imposition of duties on articles of consumption than by a direct land tax. By the one the proprietor of the soil, who has only a certain portion of the produce, and a considerable part of which is necessarily taken from him for the support of others, is taxed; whilst by the other the public shares in the profits of those persons who derive, either directly or indirectly, any benefit from the soil. Hence a tax on landed property is not only a greater burthen to the subject than taxes on articles of consumption, but is also less serviceable to the revenue. A tax of four shillings in the pound would be felt as very grievous by every landowner of the kingdom, whilst a tax on barley, in all its stages of consumption, would produce far greater results for the State, and could be levied without a murmur.*

In addition to this advantage, Walpole was aware that the Excise laws defeated the wiles of the smuggler, were less burdensome to trade, and less expensive to the merchant than the operations of the laws of the Customs. Thus impressed with the wisdom of his scheme, he began cautiously to carry it out. Knowing the aversion of the country to the name of Excise, he at first studiously avoided all mention of the hated word, though practically levying the duties implied by it.

* See Sinclair on the Revenue, vol. ii. p. 113.

He abolished the land tax. He withdrew the import duties on tea, coffee, and chocolate, and subjected them to inland duties. Then he revived the salt duty. But cleverly and insidiously as he had conducted his operations they did not escape the vigilant eye of the Opposition. A cry was raised, started by Pulteney, that these duties were but the thin end of the wedge, and that a general excise was meditated. The country became alarmed. It was said that every article of consumption was to be overhauled by the exciseman; that the nation was to be ground to powder; that the ancient Constitution was to be overthrown, and that a despotism was to rise up from its ruins. The *Craftsman* saw its opportunity, and fanned the indignation of the country by the most virulent and exaggerated articles. Meetings were held in every town in the kingdom, and resolutions carried against the extension of the excise laws. Members of Parliament were implored by their constituents to vote against the measure. The press, the pulpit, the City were loud in their denunciations. The country would be ruined; commerce would be paralyzed; the poor householder would be victimised on all sides; in short, the usual black prophecies, consequent upon a new and not rightly understood measure, were freely indulged in. Cassandra is always with us. Can we not remember the Jeremiads that were uttered over the first Reform Bill, over Roman Catholic Emancipation, over the abolition of the Corn Laws, over the substitution of vote by ballot, over every scheme that common sense, toleration, and far-sighted wisdom have instituted? Opposition and misrepresentation are the shadows of Progress.

Undeterred by this hostility, Walpole, after various

preliminary encounters with the leaders of the Opposition, introduced his scheme to the attention of the House of Commons, March 15th, 1733. The chamber was thronged on all sides; a large crowd had assembled outside the walls, and was surging up to the doors and avenues of the House; the military held themselves in readiness in case of disturbance. Perhaps at that moment Walpole was the best-hated man in England. He began his speech with studied calmness. The chief objects of the bill he was about to introduce were—to relieve the landowner by the total abolition of the land tax; to suppress the smuggling that was carried on around our coasts; and to increase the revenue by the conversion of the Customs into duties of Excise.

"As the scheme I have to propose," he said firmly, and mindful of the exaggerations and invectives of the *Craftsman*, "will not only be a great improvement to the revenue, an improvement of two or three hundred thousand pounds by the year, but also a great benefit to the fair trader, I shall not be deterred, either by calumny or clamour, from doing my duty as a member of this House, and bringing forward a measure which my own conscience justifies me in saying will be attended with the most important advantages to the Revenues and Commerce of my country.

"'Justum et tenacem propositi virum,
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
Mente quatit solidâ.'

"Amongst the many slanders to which the report of this project has exposed me, I cannot avoid mentioning one, which has been circulated with an assiduity proportioned to its want of truth, that I was about to propose *a general excise.* In all plans for the benefit of government two essential points must be considered—justice and prac-

ticability: many things are just which would not be practicable; but such a scheme would be neither one nor the other. Various are the faults of ministers, various their fates: few have had the crimes of all; none till now found that the imputation of crime to him became a merit in others. Yet if I were to propose to you such a scheme, popular opinion would run exactly in that channel. It would be a crime in me to propose, a crime in you to accept; and the only chance left to the House of retaining the favour of the people would be the unqualified rejection of the project. But *I do most unequivocally assert that no such scheme ever entered my head, or, for what I know, into the head of any man I am acquainted with.* Yet though I do not wish to do wrong, I shall always retain a proper share of courage and self-confidence to do what I judge right, and in the measures I am about to propose shall rest my claim to support and approbation on the candid, the judicious, and the truly patriotic."

He then said that he should confine himself entirely to the revenue arising from the duties on wine and tobacco. With that mastery over detail which was his *forte* he proceeded to sketch the organized system of fraud and dishonesty at work in the tobacco trade—the false weights that were used, the collusions between the tobacco merchants and the Revenue officers, and the incessant robberies of tobacco from the ships at anchor in the Thames—peculations which were a grievous loss to the State, for whilst the gross produce of the tax was some £754,000, the net produce was only £161,000. To remedy these evils, he proposed to bring the tobacco duty under the laws of the Excise, which would lower the duty some 15 per cent., and to establish warehouses

for the reception of the tobacco. The same reform might afterwards be extended to the wine duty. What were the objections raised against this measure? He was told that to carry it out it would require a standing army of Revenue officers. He begged to assure the House that this "standing army" would not exceed 126 persons—"that number, in addition to those already employed, will do all the duty." But it was argued that, by making the dealers in tobacco subject to the laws of the Excise, he was reducing those engaged in the trade to a state of slavery. "This is an assertion," replied Walpole, "the fallacy of which can only be determined by comparison. There are already ten or twelve articles of consumption subjected to the Excise laws; the revenue derived from them amounts to about £3,200,000 per annum, which is appropriated to particular purposes. A great number of persons are of course involved in the operation of these laws; yet till the present moment, when so inconsiderable an addition is proposed, not a word has been uttered about the dreadful hardships to be apprehended from them. These clamours of interested and disaffected persons are best answered by the contented taciturnity of those in whose behalf their arguments, if of any force, ought to operate. Are the brewers and maltsters slaves, or do they reckon themselves so? Are they not as free in elections to elect or be elected as any others? or let any gentleman present say, if he ever met with any opposition from or by means of an exciseman?

"The third great objection, I hear," proceeded Walpole, "is that this scheme interferes with the liberty of the subject by giving the Revenue officers power to enter and search houses. This objection," he contended, "could

not possibly have any weight without the aid of gross misconception or misrepresentation. All warehouses, cellars, shops, and rooms used for keeping, manufacturing, or selling tobacco are to be entered at the Inland Office. These are to be always liable to the inspection of the officer, and it is to be made penal to keep or conceal tobacco in any room or place not entered. But no other part of the house is liable to be searched without a warrant and a constable, which warrant is not to be granted without an affidavit of the cause of suspicion. The practice of the Customs is now stronger; they can enter with a writ of assistance without any affidavit."

Then, after recapitulating the details of his bill—showing how beneficial to the country gentlemen was the abolition of the land tax, how advantageous to the merchant was the conversion of the duties on importation into duties on consumption, and how the lower orders would not be affected by the change, since tobacco was already sold them by the retailers at the rate of duty paid —he ended his speech in the following words:

"This is the scheme which has been represented in so dreadful and terrible a light; this is the monster, the many-headed monster, which was to devour the people, and commit such ravages over the whole nation. How justly it has been represented in such a light I shall leave to this Committee and to the world without-doors to judge. I have said, and will repeat it, that whatever apprehensions and terrors people may have been brought under from a false and malicious representation of what they neither did or could know or understand, I am fully persuaded that when they have duly considered the scheme I have now the honour to open to you, they

will view it in another light; and that if it has the good fortune to meet the approbation of Parliament, and comes to take effect, the people will soon feel the happy consequences of it; and when they experience these good effects, they will no longer look on those persons as their friends who have so grossly imposed on their understandings.

"I look upon it as a most innocent scheme—it can be hurtful to none but smugglers and unfair traders. I am certain it will be of great benefit to the revenue, and will tend to make LONDON A FREE PORT, AND, BY CONSEQUENCE, THE MARKET OF THE WORLD. If I had thought otherwise of it, I would never have ventured to propose it in this place." *

But the Opposition declined to believe in the arguments of Walpole. Alderman Perry, in the name of the merchants of London, protested against the measure. Sir John Barnard, supported by the Commissioners of the Customs, contended that the frauds in the tobacco trade had been much exaggerated, and that the scheme just proposed was so bad that malice could not possibly make it worse. Pulteney met the measure with a flippancy that he sometimes adopted. "I must say," said he, "that the honourable gentleman has been of late mighty bountiful and liberal in his offers to the public. He has been so gracious to ask us, Will you have a land tax of two shillings in the pound? A land tax of one shilling in the pound? Or will you have no land tax at all? Will you have your debts paid? Will you have them soon paid? Tell me but what you want, let me but know how you can

* For the whole of Walpole's speech compiled from original notes, see Coxe, vol. i. pp. 385—389.

be made easy, and it shall be done for you. These are most generous offers; but there is something so very extraordinary, so farcical in them, that really I can hardly mention them without laughing: it puts me in mind of the story of Sir Epicure Mammon in the *Alchymist.* He was gulled of his money by fine promises; he was promised the philosopher's stone, by which he was to get mountains of gold and everything else he could desire; but all ended at last in *some little thing for curing the itch.*"

To him followed Sir William Wyndham, who was loud in his disapproval of the bill, alluded to Empson and Dudley, and denounced tyranny and corruption. "There never was a scheme," said he, "which encountered so much dislike and dissatisfaction from the people in general; the whole nation has already so openly declared their aversion that I am surprised to see it insisted on; the very proposing of such a scheme in the House of Commons, after so many remonstrances against it, I must think most audacious—it is, in a manner, flying in the face of the whole people of England."

Still Walpole, conscious of the soundness of his judgment and the rectitude of his principles, was not to be turned from his purpose. He rose up to reply to the arguments that had been hurled against his scheme. "Of late years," he said, "I have dwelt but little on the study of history, but I have a very good prompter, believe me" (alluding to Sir Philip Yorke, the Attorney-General, afterwards Lord Hardwicke), "and by his means I can recollect that the case of *Empson* and *Dudley* was so different from anything that can possibly be presumed from the case now before us that I wonder how it was possible to bring them into the debate. Those men had, by virtue

of old and obsolete laws, unjustly extorted great sums of money from people, under pretence that they had become liable to penalties for the breach of statutes which had for many years fallen into disuse. I must say (and I hope most of those who hear me will think) that it is very unjust to draw any parallel between their characters and mine. If my character is, or should ever come to be, in any respects like theirs, I shall deserve their fate. But while I know myself innocent, I shall depend upon the protection of the laws of my country; as long as they can protect me I am safe; and if that protection should fail, I am prepared to submit to the worst that can happen. I know that my political and ministerial life has by some gentlemen been long wished at an end, but they may ask their own disappointed hearts how vain their wishes have been; and as for my natural life, I have lived long enough to learn to be easy about parting with it."

He then, not perhaps with the best judgment, sneered at the agitation outside the House, and the unscrupulous tactics of those who by false charges and exaggerated conclusions had incited the hostility of the mob against the Government:

"Gentlemen may say what they please of the multitudes now at our door and in all the avenues leading to this House," he cried; "they may call them a modest multitude if they will; but whatever temper they were in when they came hither, it may be very much altered now, after having waited so long at our door. It may be very easy for some designing seditious person to raise a tumult and disorder among them, and when tumults are once begun no man knoweth where they may end; he is a greater man than any I know in the nation that could

with the same ease appease them. For this reason, I think it was neither regular nor prudent to use any methods for bringing such multitudes to this place, under any pretence whatever. Gentlemen may give them what name they think fit; it may be said they came hither as humble supplicants, but I know whom the law calls *sturdy beggars*." *

After a long debate of thirteen hours the House divided, when the measure was approved of by a majority of 61, the ayes being 266, the noes 205. The victory was with the Government, but Walpole—who had been accustomed to see the Opposition always in the most contemptible minority—felt that it was a triumph closely resembling a defeat. As he quitted the House some from the crowd outside made a rush towards him; and doubtless he would have sustained no little injury had it not been for the timely interference of his colleague Mr. Pelham.

In spite of the bill having passed through its first stage it was evident that it would never become law. The strongest opposition faced it on all sides; in the House the Government majority of 61 was rapidly declining; out of doors the clamour and indignation of the multitude were becoming formidable. Petitions against the measure were pouring in from all the large towns; the press teemed with pamphlets against the bill and its supporters; the bitterest invectives and the most odious comparisons were hurled against the Prime Minister; the merchants and the vintners pledged themselves to disobey the bill,

* "'Tis a manifest slander upon a certain gentleman to say he called the body of the people *sturdy beggars;* he only pleasantly said that when a numerous body of tradesmen, well fed and well clothed, came as petitioners, and looked at the same time as though they came to *give*, not *receive*, law, that if they were beggars they were sturdy beggars. But what is this to the body of the people? How sour and severe are these anti-ministerial writers that they won't suffer a man to *laugh!* 'Tis a sign they are as much out of humour as out of power."—*London Journal*, Sept. 1, No. 740.

should it ever become law; instructions to oppose the scheme were drawn up, sent to the different members of Parliament, and published. At last the agitation grew fiercer and fiercer, and it only wanted the slightest encouragement to break out into a dangerous rebellion. The Court was alarmed. The Queen asked Lord Scarborough, as the chief friend of the King, what course should be adopted. "The bill must be dropped," he replied. "I will answer for my regiment against the Pretender, but not against the opposers of the Excise."

Walpole was now also of that opinion. He cared little for unpopularity in the ordinary sense of the word; but an unpopularity that was undermining his power in the House of Commons was not to be lightly considered. He knew that the measure he had introduced was a sound one. He knew that the free importation of the necessaries of life would, by rendering such necessaries cheaper, reduce the price of labour. He knew that by reducing the price of labour the price of home manufactures would be decreased, and consequently—from the fact that we could afford to undersell the manufactures of other countries—the demand for our goods in the foreign markets be increased. He knew that his bill would be as serviceable to the articles that were taxed as to the articles untaxed. He saw that foreign trade would, by his plan of warehousing, be benefited, because the articles delivered out of the warehouse for exportation being exempt from all imposts, would be perfectly free; and that by these regulations the carrying trade would be greatly increased. Nor would the advantages be limited only to foreign commerce. He saw that the home trade would be powerfully stimulated; owing to the importer not being obliged to

advance the duty on the articles delivered out for interior consumption until he had disposed of his goods, he could therefore afford to sell cheaper than if he had been compelled to advance the duty at the time of importation.*

No one knew better than Walpole that the opposition his bill encountered was unjust and short-sighted, but he was the last statesman to struggle for the development of the national good at the risk of official position. His first instinct was self-preservation. It was necessary, considering the advances he had made to the Crown, the increased expenditure in the working of the State, and the sums he had drawn from the Secret Service Fund, that the Treasury should be filled. The Excise Bill would have added greatly to the revenue of the country without pressing unduly upon any one class. He had been prepared for a certain amount of opposition, but not for the violent hostility that had been excited. He now found that he had miscalculated the passion of the nation, and he was not the minister to endanger his interests by continuing in error. He called a meeting of his friends, listened to their advice in the spirit of one whose mind is already made up, and then said that he believed his bill was a wise measure, but that, as in the present temper of the people he could not enforce it without calling in the aid of the army, he would never be the minister to enforce taxes at the expense of blood, and so had come to the conclusion to abandon the scheme.

Accordingly, on the 11th of April, when the bill had been set down for the second reading, Walpole rose, and moved that it should be postponed for two months, a

* Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," vol. iii. p. 358.

delicate way of consigning it to oblivion. The Opposition were wild with joy, for as yet it was the first defeat that Walpole had sustained. Throughout the country the intelligence was hailed with the greatest delight. In London the Monument was illuminated. Bonfires were kindled in the market-place of every town. Cockades, with the inscription, "Liberty, Property, and no Excise," were worn by the enthusiastic multitude. At Oxford the University bells, with the bells of the parish churches, were rung all night. Walpole was burnt in effigy, and all his supporters came in for their full share of the public abuse.* Nor was the popularity of the Government restored till the news of the engagement of the Princess Anne, the eldest daughter of the King, to the young Prince of Orange, once more caused the country to trust in the wisdom and policy of the principal adviser of the Crown.

Thus ended the history of the famous Excise Bill—a measure which has since been adopted by posterity, and which has received the approval of every writer on Political Economy.†

* "Orford Papers," April 16, 1733. Coxe.

† See Sinclair's "History of the Revenue," and Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," ed. McCulloch. Adam Smith speaks of the Excise Bill in the highest terms, and stigmatizes the opposition raised against it as a violent and unjust clamour.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MINISTER OF PEACE. 1733—1736.

IMMEDIATELY after the defeat upon the Excise Bill, Walpole adopted a course very characteristic of the principles on which his political conduct was based. He had bowed to the wishes of the country; he had yielded, not ungracefully, to the hostility of a formidable minority in the House of Commons; and he had abandoned all idea of enforcing measures, though he knew them to be sound and well balanced. The love of power was his ruling passion, and therefore any course, if it threatened the security of his position, was to be relinquished. The clauses of the Excise Bill had raised an opposition such as he had never anticipated, but the tempest was soon quelled by the removal of the exciting cause. No one was a greater slave to public opinion than Walpole, when his own interests were concerned, but, like many men who are content to yield to pressure, he declined to be influenced by his subordinates in office. He would submit to a majority, but his Cabinet should submit to him. Where he reigned there was no room for a second king. It was not often that he quoted Scripture, but no remark was more often in his mouth than that a house divided against itself must fall. Amongst his colleagues he was resolved that there should be perfect unanimity of feeling: he was to com-

mand, they were to obey. He had found Carteret intriguing against his power, and Carteret had been dismissed. He had found Townshend at variance with his views, and Townshend had been forced to resign. The same punishment was now to be meted out to some of the most distinguished members of his Ministry.

Whilst the Excise Bill was being discussed its opponents had not been merely confined to the enemies of the Walpole administration, but had included several important peers who then held office under the Crown. Lord Chesterfield, the wit, the man of fashion, the keen debater, was at the head of this discontented faction. He had openly avowed his disapproval of the bill, had attacked it with all the pungency of his invective, and his brothers had registered their votes against it in the House of Commons. The post Chesterfield then held was Lord Steward of the Household. Two days after the withdrawal of the bill, whilst mounting the stairs of St. James's Palace, he was summoned to surrender the white staff. His supporters shared the same fate. Lord Clinton was a Lord of the Bedchamber—he was dismissed from the Household. The Earl of Burlington was captain of the Band of Pensioners —he was requested to resign his appointment. The Duke of Montrose, the Earl of Marchmont, and the Earl of Stair held high office in Scotland—they were dismissed from their posts. The Duke of Bolton and Lord Cobham were deprived of their regiments. The result of these high-handed measures was to swell the ranks of the Opposition, and to reinvigorate its hostility. Chesterfield and his adherents were now as bitter foes to the power of Walpole as were Pulteney and Bolingbroke, Wyndham and Barnard.

In this resolve to maintain unity in his Cabinet we see how Walpole understood the working of parliamentary government, and how he anticipated the judgment of posterity. As he was the first English statesman to constitute the post and to develop the power of a Prime Minister, so he was the first English statesman to recognise the necessity of unanimity amongst the advisers of the Crown. Yet it was not till 1812 that it became established as a principle of the English Constitution that all Cabinets were to be constructed upon some basis of political union. From the first Parliamentary Ministry of William III. until the rise of the second Pitt, with the exception of the anarchy that existed from 1699 to 1705, when there was no Ministry, and the political agreement during the Walpole administration, divisions in the Cabinet were of constant occurrence. At the same Council Board sat Whigs and Tories, men who advocated High Church principles and men who favoured Dissent, and it was no unusual thing to see colleagues in office opposing one another in Parliament upon measures that ought to have been supported by a united Cabinet. Walpole foresaw the evils of this internal hostility, and crushed them as they arose. It was better to contend against a formidable opposition than to encourage rebellion within the camp. With his tact, his influence, his easy political morality, he did not fear the enemy laying siege to the fortress of his power; it was the foe within the citadel that he dreaded.

His courage was soon called upon. On the 17th of January, 1734, the Houses met, and as it was the last Session of the Parliament the Opposition exerted their utmost to render the minister unpopular, and so influence

the forthcoming elections. After a series of unsuccessful attacks upon the foreign policy of the Cabinet, Pulteney and his baffled band of followers directed their criticism against the condition of domestic affairs. The Excise Bill, in spite of its withdrawal, was not permitted to rest in peace. It was too good a measure in the hands of the Opposition not to be worried to the very last. The country was under the impression that all ideas of the bill had been completely abandoned, and that its obnoxious clauses would never again come under consideration. But Pulteney, whether he drew upon his malice for his facts, or believed that he had good grounds for his statement, asserted, before a full House, that the Excise Bill was no thing of the past, but only required opportunity to be again introduced. A petition had been presented by the tea-dealers, praying for relief against the Excise laws, and the Opposition moved that the subject should be referred to a committee. Walpole held an adverse opinion; whereupon Pulteney, after indulging in no little personal invective against his former friend, said, extending his hand towards Walpole, "I am persuaded he still entertains the same opinion of the Excise, and waits only for a proper opportunity to renew it; for which reason he is unwilling that we should go into such a committee as is now proposed, lest we should sap all the foundations of any future project for a further extension of the Excise laws."

This reckless assertion at once brought Walpole up. "As to the wicked scheme," said he, "as the honourable gentleman was pleased to call it, which he would persuade us is not yet laid aside, I, for my own part, can assure this House I am not so mad as ever again to engage in anything that looks like an excise; though, in my own

private opinion, I still think it was a scheme that would have tended very much to the interests of the nation." This frank statement completely satisfied the House, and the question for referring the petition to a committee was negatived by a large majority. Many years later, when the name of Walpole was but a memory, several of the unpopular clauses of the Excise Bill were passed without murmur or opposition, simply because they were introduced under another name. A curious instance of the inconsistency and prejudices of human nature.

The next move of the Opposition was to inveigh against the high-handed dismissal of the Duke of Bolton and Lord Cobham from their military commands. In committee on the Mutiny Bill, Lord Morpeth brought forward a motion "For the better securing the Constitution, to prevent officers, not above the rank of colonels, from being removed, unless by a court-martial, or by address of either House of Parliament." He was supported by Pulteney, who, in an eloquent speech, showed how different had been the conduct of William III. under similar circumstances, who, when asked to remove an officer because of a hostile vote in the House of Commons, had replied, "I suppose the gentleman voted according to what appeared to him just and right at that time; I know him to be a brave and a good officer, and one who has always done his duty in his military capacity; I have nothing to do with his behaviour in Parliament, and therefore will not remove him from his command in the army." Pulteney also assured the House that the late King had cordially approved of a measure of this nature, and had given his consent to the late Earl Stanhope to introduce the subject to the attention of Parliament.

A warm debate ensued, which was concluded by Walpole in a speech of some length. He was opposed, he said, to the despotism of an army government, and considered the exercise of the prerogative of the Crown as a wholesome check upon military tyranny. "The behaviour of an officer," he observed, "may be influenced by malice, revenge, and faction, and on the pretence of honour and conscience; and if ever any officer of the army, because the King refused to comply with some very unreasonable demand, should resolve to oppose in everything the measures of Government, I should think any man a most pitiful minister if he should be afraid of advising his Majesty to cashier such an officer. On the contrary, I shall leave it as a legacy to all future ministers, that, upon every occasion, it is their duty to advise their master that such a man is unfit to have any command in his armies. Our King has, by his prerogative, a power of placing, preferring, and removing any officer he pleases, either in our army or militia. It is by that prerogative, chiefly, he is enabled to execute our laws, and preserve the peace of the kingdom: if a wrong use should be made of that prerogative, his ministers are accountable for it to Parliament; but it cannot be taken from him or diminished without overturning our constitution; for our present happy constitution may be overturned by republican as well as by arbitrary schemes. Therefore it must be left to his Majesty to judge by what motives an officer acts, and if he thinks an officer acts from bad motives, in duty to himself, he ought to remove him." He then dwelt upon the dangers which such a motion as that of Lord Morpeth would encourage, and wound up with the hackneyed quotation, "*Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari.*" The question

was negatived without a division. Nor were the Opposition more fortunate in the House of Lords. The subject was introduced by the Duke of Marlborough, and brilliantly supported by Chesterfield, but without effect. The bill was thrown out by a majority of 30 in a House of 127. "It is true," said the Duke of Argyle, with a sneer at the Duke of Bolton's want of military experience, "that there have been two lords removed, but only one soldier."

But the warfare of the Opposition had hitherto been limited to mere skirmishing. A battle was now to take place. Ever since the passing of the Septennial Bill the Tories had clamoured for its repeal; the Jacobites, who cared little for a Septennial Bill or a Triennial Bill, but who were always glad to seize an opportunity for attacking the Walpole administration, supported the Tories in their cry; the discontented Whigs, however—several of whom (and Pulteney amongst the number) had strongly advocated the measure in its passage through the Commons—felt scruples about uniting with the Opposition on this point. Their animosity against Walpole was as keen as personal disappointment and political hatred could sharpen it; but they were not prepared to gratify their revenge at the expense of the most flagrant inconsistency. They had supported the Septennial Bill in 1716, could they now in 1734 denounce what they had formerly advocated? It was an embarrassing position, but there was one—the wire-puller of the Tories led by Wyndham, of the Jacobites led by Shippen, of the disaffected Whigs led by Pulteney—who eventually succeeded in removing all doubts and hesitations.

From his retreat at Dawley, Bolingbroke, though he pretended to be in ill-health, and to have renounced

political life, was the guiding spirit of the Opposition. The bitterest articles in the *Craftsman* were written by him. The severest speeches delivered by the Opposition were inspired by him. His pen was ever busy denouncing the Government. . It mattered little what subject engaged his attention—whether Essays on Knowledge, or Dissertations on Parties, or attacks upon Revealed Religion—he was sure to find an opportunity of indulging in personal invective against the hated Walpole. It was Bolingbroke who assailed the foreign policy of the Government. It was Bolingbroke who had fanned, by his unscrupulous articles, the phrenzy against the Excise Bill. It was Bolingbroke, who had intrigued with every party and had been willing to betray every party, who was the most virulent denouncer of Walpole's corruption. It was Bolingbroke who had formed the discordant elements of the Opposition into one harmonious whole, with the same interests at stake, and with the same ends in view. For a time he had been unable to conquer the repugnance of the discontented Whigs to vote for the repeal of the Septennial Bill, and, not wishing to create a feud between Pulteney and Wyndham on the subject, had dropped his insidious suggestions. But since the agitation against the Excise Bill had arisen, and the ranks of the Opposition had been swelled by a formidable accession of strength, he again brought up the question. He advised Wyndham, now that the country would soon be immersed in the business of the elections, to introduce the repeal of the bill, and, if defeated, to make it a party question at the hustings. He encouraged the Jacobites to unite with those who were the truest friends of the Stuart cause. By appealing to their baser passions, he gained over to his side several of the

Whigs, whose hate was stronger than their honour, and to whom the prospect of humiliating Walpole was irresistible. Pulteney alone stood out, but even he was compelled at last to yield to the arch-temptations of the subtle adviser. Thus the Opposition were united, a large portion of the country was in favour of Triennial Parliaments, and Bolingbroke anticipated victory.

On the 13th of March the attack began. It was led by Bromley, son of the Secretary of State under Queen Anne, and seconded by Sir John St. Aubyn. Pulteney followed, but he keenly felt the inconsistency of his position, and was embarrassed and confused. On the other hand, Wyndham was calm, dignified, and eloquent. Never had he spoken better, for never had Bolingbroke been more careful in educating his disciple. Into the well-worn arguments of the supposed superiority of the Triennial system over the Septennial system which were then brought forward we need not enter—how Triennial Parliaments are no limitation upon the just power of the Crown, how continual elections are one of the chief supporters of the freedom of the nation, how long Parliaments enable the Crown to assume and make use of an unjust power, how the elections for a Septennial Parliament are more liable to be influenced by corruption than those for a Triennial, how the numerous places of profit at the disposal of the Throne require frequent new Parliaments to be assembled in order to counteract the seduction of the people by the Crown and its advisers, and the like. With all such reasons we are only too familiar, for the cry is still raised amongst us every now and then by certain interested and disappointed demagogues. The speech of Wyndham is only now memorable for its studied attack upon Sir Robert Walpole. A

great modern statesman has said that invective is an ornament of debate. If this be true, there was no lack on this occasion, either in the speech of Wyndham inspired by Bolingbroke, or in the scathing reply of Walpole, of such embellishment to the charms of oratory. After having exhausted the usual stock-in-trade arguments in favour of Triennial Parliaments, Wyndham, glowing with the reflected spite of his master, looked steadily at Walpole and thus delivered himself:

"We have been told, sir, in this House that no faith is to be given to propheeies, therefore I shall not pretend to prophesy; but I may *suppose* a case, which, though it has not yet happened, may possibly happen. Let us then suppose a man abandoned to all notions of virtue or honour, of no great family, and of but a mean fortune, raised to be Chief Minister of State, by the concurrence of many whimsical events; afraid or unwilling to trust any but creatures of his own making, and most of them equally abandoned to all notions of virtue and honour; ignorant of the true interest of his country, and consulting nothing but that of enriching and aggrandizing himself and his favourites; in foreign affairs trusting none but such whose education makes it impossible for them to have such knowledge or such qualifications as can either be of service to their country or give any weight or credit to their negotiations. Let us suppose the true interest of the nation by such means neglected or misunderstood, her honour and credit lost, her trade insulted, her merchants plundered, and her sailors murdered; and all these things overlooked, only for fear his administration should be endangered. Suppose him next possessed of great wealth, the plunder of the nation, with a Parliament of his own

choosing, most of their seats purchased and their votes bought at the expense of the public treasure. In such a Parliament, let us suppose attempts made to inquire into his conduct, or to relieve the nation from the distress he has brought upon it; and when lights proper for attaining those ends are called for, not perhaps for the information of the particular gentlemen who call for them, but because nothing can be done in a parliamentary way until these things be in a proper way laid before Parliament. Suppose these lights refused, these reasonable requests rejected by a corrupt majority of his creatures, whom he retains in daily pay, or engages in his particular interest, by granting them those posts and places which ought never to be given to any but for the good of the public. Upon this scandalous victory, let us suppose this Chief Minister pluming himself in defiances, because he finds he has got a Parliament, like a packed jury, ready to acquit him at all adventures. Let us farther suppose him arrived to that degree of insolence and arrogance as to domineer over all the men of ancient families, all the men of sense, figure, or fortune in the nation; and as he has no virtue of his own, ridiculing it in others, and endeavouring to destroy or corrupt in all.

"I am still not prophesying, I am only *supposing;* and the case I am going to suppose I hope never will happen; but with such a Minister and such a Parliament, let us suppose a Prince upon the throne, either for want of true information or for some other reason, ignorant and unacquainted with the inclinations and the interest of his people, weak, and hurried away by unbounded ambition and insatiable avarice. This case has never happened in this nation; I hope, I say, it will never exist; but as it is

possible it may, could there any greater curse happen to a nation than such a Prince on the throne, advised, and solely advised, by such a Minister, and that Minister supported by such a Parliament. The nature of mankind cannot be altered by human laws, the existence of such a Prince or such a Minister we cannot prevent by Act of Parliament; but the existence of such a Parliament I think we may: and as such a Parliament is much more likely to exist and may do more mischief while the Septennial law remains in force, than if it were repealed, therefore I am most heartily for the repeal of it."

Walpole at once rose to reply. Well aware from whom Wyndham had derived his elaborate invective, the Minister retorted in the same vein, and without personally alluding to Bolingbroke drew a picture, picked out here and there with verbal aqua-fortis, of a former Minister and a Mock Patriot, which even the most stupid could not fail to interpret aright.

"Sir," he began, addressing the Speaker, but looking in the direction of Wyndham, "I do assure you, I did not intend to have troubled you in this debate, but such incidents now generally happen towards the end of our debates, nothing at all relating to the subject, and gentlemen make such suppositions, meaning some person, or perhaps, as they say, no person now in being, and talk so much of wicked Ministers, domineering Ministers, Ministers pluming themselves in defiances, which terms, and such like, have been of late so much made use of in this House that if they really mean nobody either in the House or out of it, yet it must be supposed they at least mean to call upon some gentleman in this House to make them a reply; and therefore I hope I may be allowed to draw a

picture in my turn; and I may likewise say that I do not mean to give a description of any particular person now in being. When gentlemen talk of Ministers abandoned to all sense of virtue or honour, other gentlemen may, I am sure, with equal justice, and I think more justly, speak of Anti-Ministers and Mock Patriots, who never had either virtue or honour, but in the whole course of their opposition are actuated only by motives of envy, and of resentment against those who have disappointed them in their views, or may not perhaps have complied with all their desires.

"But now, sir, let me too *suppose*, and the House being cleared, I am sure no person that hears me can come within the description of the person I am to suppose. Let us suppose in this or in some other unfortunate country an Anti-Minister, who thinks himself a person of so great and extensive parts, and of so many eminent qualifications, that he looks upon himself as the only person in the kingdom capable to conduct the public affairs of the nation, and therefore christening every other gentleman who has the honour to be employed in the administration by the name of Blunderer. Suppose this fine gentleman, lucky enough to have gained over to his party some persons really of fine parts, of ancient families, and of great fortunes, and others of desperate views, arising from disappointed and malicious hearts; all these gentlemen, with respect to their political behaviour, moved by him, and by him solely; all they say, either in private or public, being only a repetition of the words he has put into their mouths, and a spitting out that venom which he has infused into them; and yet we may suppose this Leader not really liked by any, even of those who so blindly follow him, and hated by all the rest of mankind.

"We will suppose this Anti-Minister to be in a country where he really ought not to be, and where he could not have been but by an effect of too much goodness and mercy, yet endeavouring, with all his might and with all his art, to destroy the fountain from whence that mercy flowed. In that country suppose him continually contracting friendships and familiarities with the Ambassadors of those Princes who at the time happen to be most at enmity with his own; and if at any time it should happen to be for the interest of any of those Foreign Ministers to have a secret divulged to them, which might be highly prejudicial to his native country, as well as to all its friends; suppose this Foreign Minister applying to him, and he answering, I will get it you, tell me but what you want, I will endeavour to procure it for you: upon this he puts a speech or two in the mouths of some of his creatures, or some of his new converts; what he wants is moved for in Parliament, and when so very reasonable a request as this is refused, suppose him and his creatures and tools, by his advice, spreading the alarm over the whole nation, and crying out, Gentlemen, our country is at present involved in many dangerous difficulties, all which we would have extricated you from, but a wicked Minister and a corrupt majority refused us the proper materials; and upon this scandalous victory, this Minister became so insolent as to plume himself in defiances.

"Let us farther suppose this Anti-Minister to have travelled, and at every Court where he was, thinking himself the greatest Minister, and making it his trade to betray the secrets of every Court where he had before been; void of all faith or honour, and betraying every master he ever served. I could carry my suppositions a great deal farther,

and I may say I mean no person now in being; but if we can suppose such a one, can there be imagined a greater disgrace to human nature than such a wretch as this?"

He then seriously discussed the question before the House, and refuted one by one the arguments of his opponents. He showed that those who had voted in favour of the motion had mistaken the nature of the English Constitution, and that in a mixed government like that of England the evils anticipated by the Opposition could never have the opportunity of arising. On the other hand, triennial elections would not only make government too tedious in all its resolves, but would give encouragement to the dangers always to be expected from a democratic movement. "If our parliaments," said he, "were either annual or triennial, by such frequent elections there would be so much power thrown into the hands of the people as would destroy that equal mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy which is the beauty of our Constitution. In short, our government would really become a democratic government, and might from thence very probably diverge in a tyrannical. Therefore, in order to preserve our Constitution, in order to prevent our falling under tyranny and arbitrary power, we ought to preserve that law, which I really think has brought our Constitution to a more equal mixture, and, consequently, to a greater perfection than it was ever in before that law took place."

Then dealing with the question of bribery and corruption, he declined to believe that the majority of electors could be influenced by such base means. "There may be some bribery and corruption in the nation," he said meekly; "I am afraid there will always be some. But it is no proof of

it that strangers are sometimes chosen; for a gentleman may have so much natural influence over a borough in his neighbourhood as to be able to prevail with them to choose any person he pleases to recommend; and if upon such recommendation they choose one or two of his friends, who are perhaps strangers to them, it is not from thence to be inferred that the two strangers were chosen their representatives by the means of bribery and corruption."

With regard to the accusation that money was issued from the Treasury to influence elections, he said that he was simply amazed at the charge. How could such corruption take place, when checks were placed upon every shilling spent by the Treasury, and the money granted in one year for the service of the nation had to be accounted for in the very next session to the House of Commons? The thing was impossible! After vindicating the country and its representatives from the accusations of dishonesty raised by the enemies of the Government, he showed how unwise would be the system of constant elections, when certain mischievous politicians made it their business to raise ferments amongst the people without any just cause. "Do not we know," he cried, "what a ferment was raised in the nation soon after his late Majesty's accession? And if an election had then been allowed to come on while the nation was in that ferment, it might perhaps have had as fatal effects as the former; but, thank God, this was wisely provided against by the very law which is now wanted to be repealed. I hope," he said in conclusion, "the people have now in a great measure come to themselves, and therefore I doubt not but the next elections will show that, when they are left to judge coolly, they can distinguish between the real and

the pretended friends to the Government. But I must say, if the ferment then raised in the nation had not already greatly subsided, I should have thought a new election a very dangerous experiment; and as such ferments may hereafter often happen, I must think that frequent elections will always be dangerous; for which reason, in so far as I can see at present, I shall, I believe, at all times think it a very dangerous experiment to repeal the Septennial Bill."*

The speech was a success. It was felt by all who were not insanely blinded by their hatred to Walpole that the strictures passed upon the minister by Wyndham were as unjust as they were coarse. To describe Walpole's rise to power as solely due to "wriggling, intriguing, whispering, and bargaining himself into the dangerous post to which he was not called by the general suffrage, nor perhaps by the deliberate choice of his master himself," was manifestly untrue, and credible only by men whose hate was stronger than their judgment. Walpole was the acknowledged and trusted leader of a great political party. He was placed at the head of affairs because it was felt that his powers of administration, his great financial abilities, his eloquence, his tact in managing men, entitled him to the post. His policy was sound, wise, and judicious, and with his hand at the helm the country was at peace with its neighbours, its commerce was increasing, and on all sides new industries were springing up. He enjoyed the fullest confidence of the King, who knew that amongst the Opposition there was none who was the equal of Walpole. That the minister was tenacious of power, and

* An abstract of this speech is given by Coxe, compiled from the "Walpole Papers."

jealous of its exercise by another, was evident to all, but at the same time it was not by intrigue or by corruption that he held it, but by the great parliamentary services he had rendered to his King and country.

Wyndham was therefore not a little blamed for his bitter attack. The more respectable of the Tories, ashamed of the comparison he had made between Walpole and the corrupt minister, loudly declared they could not identify the portrait, and bade Bolingbroke before he again instructed his disciple to remember the shortcomings in his own past history. The man whose political career was far from stainless, and whose personal habits were one long debauch, was hardly fit to preach a high tone of morality, or to condemn the fault in another that he himself had committed. Even Pulteney blamed Wyndham for being too much under the influence of Bolingbroke. The result of this uncalled for onslaught upon Walpole was to excite the sympathies of the House in his favour, and many who before had been cold to his cause rallied round him in this hour of insult. A crowded chamber cordially cheered his retaliation upon Bolingbroke, murmured its assent to his arguments against the repeal of the bill, and though it might have had its own views as to the explanations touching bribery and corruption, yet was in too good humour to show signs of dissatisfaction. The motion of the Opposition was defeated by a large majority.

The rejection of this motion closed the labours of the session. On the dissolution of Parliament the country was disturbed by the agitation attendant upon a general election. In every shire and at every borough the contest was most keen. The enemies of the Government were sanguine of victory, and at first it seemed as if their hopes would be

fulfilled. The people were still smarting under their late fears respecting the Excise Bill, Triennial Parliaments were advocated by a large portion of the community, and the old cry of bribery and corruption throughout the King's services was not raised in vain. But the chief obstacle to the success of the Whigs was the attitude assumed by Walpole, in face of the foreign complications then gravely menacing the tranquillity of the Continent. Into this question we must now enter.

The great feature in the history of the Walpole administration is its eminently pacific policy. Whether Sir Robert considered the sword to be a brutal and inhuman instrument for the settlement of political difficulties, whether he feared that war might endanger the stability of his own position in the State, or whether, considering the geographical situation of England, he deemed non-intervention in foreign matters to be the course best calculated to develop the prosperity of the country, it is certain that his voice was always raised in favour of peace. Within the last few months his pacific principles had been rudely put to the test, for an event had occurred which, though small in itself, was calculated to embitter power against power, and create a general European war. Early in the year 1733 Augustus II., King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, had breathed his last. The kingdom being elective, the usual competition ensued for the vacant throne. Two candidates presented themselves. The one was King Stanislaus, who had already reigned over Poland, but who, in 1710, had been declared for ever incapable of being elected king; the other was Augustus, the son of the deceased monarch. Each competitor had his supporters. Augustus was befriended by the Emperor Charles and the

Czarina Anne of Russia; Stanislaus found a protector in his father-in-law, the King of France. The rivals were not slow to assert their claims. Stanislaus started from Paris, assumed various disguises, and after a journey not destitute of adventure arrived at Warsaw. Here he declared himself, was recognised by a large portion of his former subjects, and was declared king. But his eastern neighbour had no intention of permitting this simple solution of the difficulty. A large Russian army entered Lithuania, carried everything before them, forced the newly crowned monarch to fly the country, and proclaimed in his stead Augustus III., who now ascended the throne.

Thanks to the prudent counsel of Walpole, the Emperor Charles had taken no direct part in the elevation of Augustus; but though no Imperial troops had marched side by side with those of Russia, yet Charles had so warmly espoused the cause of the present occupant of the Polish throne, by co-operating with the Russian and Saxon ministers, and by massing several regiments on the Polish frontier, as to entangle himself in a war with both France and Spain. At this time it was the ambition of the Queen of Spain to obtain a crown for her son, Don Carlos, the Duke of Parma. Aided by France, and afterwards by Sardinia, she determined to carry her designs into execution. In a few weeks the allies entered the Milanese, and Austrian Lombardy was at their mercy. Alone, Charles had to bear the brunt of this joint attack. Russia, with her usual selfishness, having gained the end she had in view, declined to assist him. Aid from England, Holland, and Denmark had been asked for in vain. Thus, single-handed and pressed on all sides, the Emperor was soon in

dire extremities. He was defeated at La Crocetta. A Spanish army, marching on to Naples, had conquered the town; Capua and Gaeta were besieged, and after a short resistance forced to surrender. Sicily, without a blow, yielded to the Spanish arms, and the young Duke of Parma was called to the throne. Philipsburg was taken by the French, and had it not been for the military genius of Eugene, the Imperialists would have suffered the same reverses on the Rhine as they had to submit to south of the Alps.

Such was the state of the Continent when the Whigs and Tories at home were fighting for supremacy on the battle-field of the General Election. To Englishmen, whose sympathies are generally easily enlisted in favour of the weak, the aspect of a power—a power too that had once been a stanch ally—fighting single-handed against terrible odds appealed at once to their sense of fair play. The pacific policy of the Ministry was disapproved of. It was said that by standing aloof England assisted in the degradation of her old friend the House of Austria, and in exalting her old enemy the House of Bourbon. The King was strongly in favour of uniting with the Emperor. The Queen, though approving of the views of her Chief Minister, felt herself in this case powerless to oppose the wishes of her consort. Lord Harrington, who, as Secretary of State, was principally intrusted with the negotiations with the Court of Vienna, agreed with the King. Other members of the Cabinet, with the true servility of courtiers, supported the opinion of the monarch. The Opposition almost to a man were favourable to war. Even many who sat on the Treasury side of the House voted that England should send her troops to

the Continent to befriend the forsaken Charles. Thus Walpole, in the maintenance of a pacific and neutral policy, stood almost isolated.

To avoid offending the King, to avoid the imputation of wishing to aggrandize the House of Bourbon at the expense of Austria, to avoid a disruption in the Cabinet —required all his soundness of judgment and fineness of diplomacy. Still the country was prosperous, trade was buoyant, the landed interest was pleased with the abolition of its former taxations, the Jacobites were mute and sullen and their intrigues on the wane, and the minister was determined not to wreck the happy position of the nation for so vain and distant an object as a war for the Polish succession. Like all men surrounded by difficulties, his only course was to temporise, in the hopes that time would show him some way of extrication from his present embarrassment. His maxim was that of Mazarin, "Time and I against the world." He sent his brother Horace to the Hague to sound the views of the United Provinces. He advised the King to give no decided answer to the Court of Vienna till the elections were over and a new Parliament had assembled. He begged Lord Harrington to promise nothing.

After frequent disputes and divisions, Walpole at last succeeded in gaining over the King and Cabinet to his views. An answer was accordingly returned to the request for succour from the Court of Vienna to the effect that "the King was concerned to see the peace broken, and the Emperor attacked; that he had hitherto employed his best offices, though unsuccessfully, to prevent the rupture, and would now use all possible means to accommodate matters. That the motives hitherto alleged for the commission of

hostilities being founded upon Polish affairs, in which the King had taken no part but that of using his good offices, it was far from being clear that he was obliged, purely upon that account, to enter into the quarrel. That as to the demand of succour, the King, though always ready to execute his engagements, and show his particular friendship for the Emperor, must yet be satisfied that the demand was founded on positive engagements before he involved his people in a war. That therefore he must carefully examine the allegations on both sides, and consult his allies, particularly the States-General, and put himself in such a posture as might enable him to provide effectually for his own security, and for the execution of his engagements." *

Irritated at this reply, and aware to whom he was indebted for it, the Emperor broke out into threats. He sent a scoundrel priest, one Abbé Strickland, who had intrigued for the Pretender and then had gone over to the English Government and had betrayed both, to stir up animosity against Walpole during the general election. He threatened to marry one of the Archduchesses to Don Carlos. Knowing how anxious the Netherlands were for neutrality, he declared he would remove the war into Flanders, and attack France on the side of Luxemburg. But hotly pressed by his French, Spanish, and Sardinian foes, the Emperor soon found himself fully occupied in defending his own dominions, without having the opportunity of indulging in his revengeful tactics.

In his direction of foreign affairs the conduct of Walpole gave rise to much discussion. In several quarters he was blamed as weak and pusillanimous. He was

* Coxe.

accused of deserting his old allies, and the happy position of England—at peace, prosperous, and wealthy—was sneered at as that of "tame tranquillity." It was said that by the clauses of the Treaty of Vienna he was bound to support the Emperor, and that his refusal was a degradation to England. Such views influenced more than one shire and borough, and placed a Tory at the head of the poll where formerly a Whig had been successful. But still there was a large portion of the country which knew that that contemptible "tame tranquillity" signified home preserved from the horrors of war, no heavy demands on yearly incomes, a brisk and increasing state of commerce, the calm and security always attendant upon a people prosperous at home and at peace with its neighbours. These advantages were no poor set-off against the glories of military triumphs and the gratification of national revenge. Though the Whigs lost several seats, they still numbered a respectable majority. "On the whole," wrote the Duke of Newcastle to Horace Walpole, "our Parliament is, I think, a good one; but by no means such a one as the Queen and Sir Robert imagine. It will require great care, attention, and management to set out right, and to keep people in good humour."

All thoughts were now directed to the approaching contest at St. Stephen's. "We are all engaged here at the present moment," writes M. Johnn, the Danish Envoy, taking a more sanguine view than his Grace of Newcastle, to M. de Hagen,* "with the preparation for the next Parliament, and already it most clearly appears that the measures of the minister have been so well taken that the Court can rest assured of a vast superiority in all the

* "Orford Papers," December 24, 1734. Coxe.

debates that will ensue during the session, besides everything that will conduce to this result is arranged with a care and attention beyond imagination. Whatever may be said against Sir Robert Walpole, both friends and enemies ought to agree in this, that in the administration of domestic affairs England has never seen his equal. With regard to foreign affairs, he is the first to admit that he does not possess the knowledge he should have; still it is remarked that whenever an affair is clearly explained to him, his judgment upon it is, as a rule, far sounder than that of those who pretend to be intimately acquainted with foreign questions."

On the 14th of January, 1735, the new Parliament met. Debates on foreign affairs naturally absorbed the lion's share of the session. Never had Walpole been more pressed, never had he greater need of his keen political insight and diplomatic cunning. The Opposition were eager for war, and strongly denounced the minister who, in spite of treaties and obligations, permitted their old ally the House of Austria to be humbled by their old foe, the House of Bourbon. The King, though not daring to thwart the designs of Walpole, was secretly in favour of supporting the Emperor. Charles, aware of the pacific views of the First Lord of the Treasury, was intensely bitter against the ascendancy of Walpole, and did all in his power to increase the divisions of the Cabinet. Cardinal Fleury was now playing a double game, carrying on a secret correspondence with England unknown to the Emperor, and then conducting secret negotiations with the Emperor unknown to England. Spain and Portugal were on the eve of a quarrel. Chauvelin, the French Secretary of State, was intriguing with the Pretender, and fanning

the animosity of the Opposition. Hostilities had broken out between Russia and Turkey. "Everywhere I look," writes Horace Walpole, "the clouds are black."

Yet the judgment and finesse of Walpole preserved his country from war, and through his mediation peace was at last established. Into the intrigues and counter intrigues between London and Paris, Madrid and Vienna, Lisbon and the Hague, we cannot now enter. More wearisome State papers than those written at this time the literature of diplomacy does not possess.* Suffice it to say that the Emperor, finding that neither England nor Holland would assist him in his hour of distress, and harassed on all sides by his French, Spanish, and Sardinian foes, was induced to listen to proposals of peace, set on foot by the English Cabinet. A plan of pacification was drawn up. It was stipulated that Stanislaus should renounce his pretensions to the Polish throne, in consideration of the cession of the Duchy of Lorraine, which, after his death, was to be reunited to the crown of France. That the Duke of Lorraine, in exchange for his hereditary dominions, was to have Tuscany, together with a handsome revenue settled upon him by France. That the Emperor should acknowledge Don Carlos as King of the Two Sicilies, and accept the Duchies of Parma and Placentia as an indemnification. Certain parts of the Duchy of Milan were to be handed over to Sardinia. In consideration of these cessions, France was to restore all her conquests in Germany, and to guarantee the Pragmatic sanction, or, in other words, to recognise that the dominions of the House of Austria should descend in the female line supposing the Emperor to die without male

* Nearly one whole volume of Coxe is devoted to these documents.

issue. These preliminaries, agreed to in 1735, were confirmed by a definitive treaty, November 18, 1738.

In his conduct of these international negotiations we see again how thoroughly Walpole understood the position of England, and anticipated the policy which now guides our interference in foreign affairs. In his reluctance to shed English blood there was nothing pusillanimous, nothing derogatory to his country's honour. Ever since the Revolution Englishmen had been so accustomed to take part in all Continental complications—now because it suited the Dutch prejudices of one king, then because it suited the Hanoverian views of another king—that when a European war broke out, and our country remained silent and neutral, it seemed to many that such a position was weak and unbecoming. Walpole thought differently. He saw that England, from her geographical situation, should pursue a foreign policy in harmony with other powers, yet not following exactly in the same lines as that of Continental countries. Any question which affected her maritime interests, crippled her commerce, or directly interfered with her national prestige, was vigorously to be dealt with; but in matters in which neither the honour nor possessions of England were directly involved our country should hold herself aloof from the aggressive. It was for this reason that Walpole invariably opposed the German views of the King. Because a certain line of action suited the interests of Hanover, it was no reason that the adoption of such a course would increase the welfare of England. And unless England was benefited by the transaction Walpole declined to encourage ideas of hostilities. Because France had been the hereditary foe of England, he saw no reason why England should

always act in opposition to the House of Bourbon. Because Austria had been the friend of England, it did not necessarily follow that England, unless her own interests were directly concerned, should always support the Empire. The Polish succession was a question of the most trifling importance to England. It might interest Spain, or Austria, or France, or Russia, but since it did not interest the country over which he ruled Walpole declined to throw his weight into the balance.

As for the charge that the neutrality of England was contrary to the Treaty of Vienna, and an evasion of stipulated obligations, the briefest consideration will disprove it. Between the Cabinets of St. James's and the Hague there had been an agreement that England should not enter into hostilities with any Continental power unless supported by Holland. On this occasion the Dutch, aware of the defenceless condition of their frontier, declined to court an invasion from France, by co-operating with the Empire. To the States-General the question of the Polish succession was as immaterial as it was to England. In addition to this reasonable objection, the Dutch were offended with England for having given the Princess Anne in marriage to the Prince of Orange, and were suspicious of the interests of the Prince of Orange being promoted at the expense of the Dutch constitution should Holland take part with the Emperor. Since the Hague refused to be drawn into hostilities, Walpole, true to the agreement between the two maritime powers, declined to support the Empire by breaking faith with the Dutch. This resolution was the more easily maintained from its happening to coincide with the views of the minister.

Thus we see throughout the whole of these negotiations

that Walpole, though pretending to no great knowledge of foreign affairs, yet from his own sound sense and natural foresight acted upon the policy which we now adopt. And this policy is to extend our commercial relations, not to interfere unnecessarily in the affairs of other countries, and to endeavour legitimately to promote the good government and prosperity of all people. "If the English ministers," wrote Bolingbroke, soured and disappointed, and fearful of punishment, from his retreat in Paris, "had any hand in this peace, they are worse than I thought them; and if not, they are luckier than they deserve to be." The peace was, however, due to no luck, but to the wisdom, the tact, and the patience of Walpole.

"Of treaties made, of peace obtain'd,
Of blessings by your councils gain'd,
Of nations from the wasting sword
To plenty and to joy restor'd;
Of Princes taught their bounds to know,
Where and no farther they shall go;
Of Europe's balance pois'd by thee,
Thy Master great, thy country free;
What muse in never-dying verse
Worthy the subject shall rehearse?" *

Whilst these foreign transactions were being conducted to a happy issue, matters nearer home were causing no little trouble and anxiety to the minister. Drink has always been the favourite vice of our lower classes, and the hold it maintains over them lies at the root of half the crime and pauperism of the country. During the earlier years of the reign of George II. the peace and prosperity which the nation enjoyed had led the people, with taxes low, trade flourishing, and wages high, to indulge in their favourite propensity to an alarming extent. The spread of intoxication was so rapid that from a

* "Ode to Sir Robert Walpole on the Present State of Affairs in Europe."

private evil it swelled into the proportions of a national calamity. Employers of labour were complaining that their men would work only half their time, and during that half were seldom sober; the workhouses were full of those whom the accursed thraldom of drink had reduced from comfort to indigence; and, as is always the case when vice is rampant and refuses to be restrained, crime was a terrible competitor of honest industry. Matters at last had reached such a crisis that the interference of the Legislature was demanded. Then as now gin was the favourite spirit of the masses. A petition was presented to the House of Commons from the Middlesex magistrates, stating that "the constant and excessive use of Geneva had already destroyed thousands of his Majesty's subjects, and rendered great numbers of others unfit for useful labour and service, debauching at the same time their morals, and driving them into all manner of vice and wickedness," and praying that the evil might be remedied.

The question was considered by the House. It was proposed by Sir Joseph Jekyll, foremost amongst the philanthropists of his day, to lay a tax on gin and other spirituous liquors of so heavy a nature as virtually to prohibit their use by the people. This tax was to be twenty shillings on every gallon sold by retail, whilst every retailer was to pay an annual sum of fifty pounds for his licence. Both Walpole and Pulteney were unfavourable to this proposal. The leaders of the Opposition disapproved of it, because it drew a distinction between the poor and the rich, allowing the wealthy to obtain their spirits direct from the distillers on the former scale of taxation, whilst the poor, who would

necessarily have recourse to the retailers, would have to pay an exorbitant sum for the same article. Walpole, though not opposing the suggestion of Jekyll, regarded it from the statesman's point of view, fearing that if carried out it would tend to diminish the revenue and encourage smuggling. The House was, however, in favour of the measure, and the bill, called the Gin Act, became law. As the duties hitherto levied had belonged to the Civil List, and had amounted to an annual total of some seventy thousand pounds, Walpole now recommended that that sum should be granted to the King in compensation for the loss the Civil List would sustain from the reduced consumption of spirituous liquors. After no little opposition this recommendation was adopted.

As soon as it was known out of doors that the Gin Act had been passed a mutiny against the measure broke out among the mob. The people declined to obey the law. In defiance of every restriction, gin was secretly sold. Riots occurred in the more squalid districts of the town. The Jacobites, only too glad to annoy the Government, fomented the insurrection, and offered drink to the crowd. Had it not been for the vigilance of Walpole, who had anticipated all these evils, and had declared that if the bill passed it would soon have to be modified, a dangerous *émeute* might have been the result. "I have forborne troubling you," he writes to his brother at the Hague,* "with the various surmises and apprehensions which of late at different times have filled the town with different fears and expectations, concerning the first and immediate consequences that might attend the commencement of the Gin Act, because it was difficult at some times to form

* "Walpole Papers," September 30, 1736. Coxe.

any probable opinion of what might happen; and at other times, and especially lately, it appeared a great deal more reasonable that there would not be any trouble or disorder at all, until about the middle of last week. I then began to receive again accounts from all quarters of the town that the Jacobites were busy and industrious in endeavouring to stir up the common people, and make an advantage of the universal clamour that prevailed among the populace at the approaching expiration of this darling vice. The scheme that was laid was, for all the distillers that were able to give away *gratis*, to all that should ask for it, as much gin and strong waters as they should desire, and the great distillers were to supply all the retailers and small shops with as much as they should want to be distributed and given away in like manner. The shops were to begin to be opened on Tuesday evening, the eve of Michaelmas Day, and to be continued and repeated on Wednesday night, that the mob, being made thus drunk, might be prepared and ready to commit any sort of mischief; and in order to this, anonymous letters were sent to the distillers and town retailers in all parts of the town, to instruct them, and incite them to rise and join their friends, and do as their neighbours did. Four of these letters have fallen into my hands, which the persons to whom they were directed discovered and brought to us: and by the Excise officers that go round the town I am informed that letters to the same purpose were dropt, and directed to most of the distillers in all quarters. Those we have seen differ very little from each other in the tenor and substance, and the strong criminal expressions are in all the same, only transposed. In such as were less formal, and not so laboured, the word was given

Sir Robert and Sir Joseph. Upon the information, the Queen was pleased to give such orders to the Guards as you will have had an account of, which have had the designed effect, and in the opinion of all mankind are thought to have prevented the greatest mischief and disorders that have of late been known or heard of, at least we have the satisfaction to have our measures universally applauded."

With the aid of the military and of the train bands that were called out, the riot was suppressed, and the agitators sent to prison. As Walpole had predicted, the scheme was a failure, and shortly afterwards its partial and invidious clauses were rescinded.*

But the second attempt of the Opposition to effect legislative improvement required all Walpole's dexterity to deal with. Ever since the accession of the House of Hanover, the Dissenters had been most loyal to the Throne and among the stanchest supporters of Whig principles. They busied themselves most actively at all elections in favour of the Government; they regarded a Protestant King as their natural champion and protector; and they were the bitterest denouncers of the intrigues of the Jacobites and of the claims of the House of Stuart. To Walpole the Dissenters had been the most ardent and useful of all his friends. They had supported him when attacked by his enemies; they had voted for his candidates; they had approved of his foreign policy; and, being for the most part men engaged in commerce, they had cordially seconded his financial schemes. In the pamphlets that issued from their press, at their meeting-houses, at their shops, their voice had ever been for Walpole in preference to Carteret, or Stanhope, or Townshend.

* Coxe, vol. i. p. 476. Stanhope's "History of England," vol. ii. pp. 284, 285.

It was not, therefore, unnatural that after these services the large body of Nonconformists, smarting under the grievances that bigotry and intolerance had imposed upon them, should look to the First Lord of the Treasury for redress. The Test Act, in spite of the promises made to Stanhope, when in 1719 he had agitated for its repeal, was still the law of the land. By its clauses all were excluded from Government employment who refused to take the oath of allegiance and supremacy, and to receive the Holy Communion according to the rites of the Established Church. Thus, according to the letter of the law, no Dissenter could take office under the Crown so long as he held himself at variance with the Church of England. But though legally he was prevented from obtaining Government employment, practically the restriction was removed by an Indemnity Bill, passed every year after the accession of George II., allowing Nonconformists to hold office. Still the Dissenters, though receiving no actual injury from the continuance of the Test Act in the statute book, rightly viewed its prohibitory clauses as an insult to their order, and were frequent in the appeals to their First Lord for its repeal. But Walpole, ever mindful of the clerical storm raised by the Sacheverell prosecution, had no intention of courting the hostility of the Church, by supporting the claims of its hereditary foes. To all the petitions and demands of the Dissenters he gave an evasive answer, and fed them with the hopes that make the heart sick. At last a stout Nonconformist divine, one Dr. Chandler, craved an interview with the Prime Minister, and again mentioned the grievances of his body. Walpole returned his stock answers, "the time had not yet come," "they must wait a more favourable opportunity," "he had their best interests

at heart," and the other usual evasions of polite refusal. But the divine determined to brook these official insincerities no longer. "You have so repeatedly returned us this answer," he said, "that I trust you will give me leave to ask you when the time *will* come?" Irritated at this importunity, and sick of the subject, Walpole replied shortly, "If you require a specific answer I will give it you in one word—Never!"

This injudicious frankness led to what might easily be expected. It seems to have been part of the policy of Walpole to be indifferent to the number of enemies he created, provided he could preserve the support of the political bodies most necessary for maintaining his power. If it were to be a choice between the Church and the Dissenters, the Dissenters must go to the wall. Made acquainted with the views of the minister they had trusted and supported, the Dissenters, for the same reasons as had induced the disappointed Pulteney and Chesterfield to quit the ranks of the Whigs, now added their strength to the Opposition. Walpole, however, was still confident. His enemies were every session becoming more formidable and their hostility deepening in its bitter aggressiveness, yet Walpole still maintained his powerful majority. Though in several parts of the country the elections of 1735 had been adverse to the Whig cause, yet, when the new Parliament met, in spite of the hopes of the Tories and the fears of the more timid in the Cabinet, it was found that the power of the First Lord of the Treasury was as firm and assured as ever. The Queen ruled the King, and Walpole ruled the Queen: the landed gentry, pleased with their diminished taxation, rallied in stronger numbers round the standard of

the Whig cause; the Church and the City were on the side of the minister, whilst the large floating population of the House of Commons, which called itself independent, was as much under the influence of the Treasury guineas as its predecessors. Both to the Court and the Cabinet, the position of Walpole seemed impregnable.

Allied with the Opposition, the Dissenters now looked to one of the leaders of the disaffected party to take up the cudgels in their defence. Accordingly the repeal of the Test Act was moved by Plummer in what his contemporaries called "a very able speech." Walpole replied in the spirit of a man who tries to please both sides, and who, though feeling bound to give his voice in favour of one party, yet offers his support with such delicacy and consideration as not to offend those with whom he declines to act. In the words of the historian Tindal, "Though the minister opposed the motion in the present instance, he did it with such candour and moderation, and expressed himself so cautiously with regard to the Church, and so affectionately with regard to the Dissenters, that neither party had cause to complain of him." Still, in spite of his "affection," Walpole voted against the motion of Plummer, and the result was a majority for the Government of 251 against 123.*

Nothing, however, exhibits more strongly Walpole's natural love of toleration, when it could safely be exercised, than his conduct in the discussion of the Quakers' Bill. Personally, the First Lord of the Treasury was indifferent to all creeds and forms of religion, and provided they were not dangerous to the State would have placed them all on an equal footing. But when political considerations

* Cont. Tindal, vol. xx. p. 323. Stanhope, vol. ii. pp. 279, 280.

intervened he regarded the question of toleration not as one of right or principle, but as one of purely party tactics. Had the Dissenters obtained a majority in the House of Commons, he would have redressed their grievances; they were in a minority, and he felt it his political duty not to interfere. With that small body of Nonconformists called Quakers he was placed in a different situation. To them he was bound by many local ties. In Norfolk was their chief home; their meeting-houses were erected in every town in the county; they were stanch adherents of the Whig party, and had unanimously voted for Walpole and his candidates during the recent elections; they were quiet orderly citizens, and, saving a few Anglican bigots who anathematized all outside the pale of the Church, had no enemies. Shortly after the debate on the repeal of the Test Act the Quakers had presented a petition to Walpole praying for relief in the recovery of tithes. Their conscience would not permit them to pay ecclesiastical dues, and for their refusal in the matter "they were not only liable to, but many of them had undergone, grievous sufferings by prosecution in the Exchequer, Ecclesiastical, and other courts, to the imprisonment of their persons, and the impoverishing and ruin of them and their families;" they therefore prayed the House of Commons to afford them such relief as to its members should seem meet.* With his

* "An account of the sufferings and prosecutions of the Quakers in the several courts since the 7th and 8th of King William, when the justices had power to judge of tithes demanded under the value of £10."

Prosecution in		Imprisoned.	Died in Prison.
Chancery	38	10	1
Exchequer	787	185	2
Ecclesiastical Courts . . .	269	81	2
Common Law Courts . . .	59	..	..
	1,153	276	5

Gentleman's Magazine, 1736, p. 265.

usual caution the minister first felt the pulse of the House before he took any active steps in the matter. Secretly in favour of the measure, he was pleased to find that a strong majority were willing to accede to the petition; it was thought that the Quakers had been hardly treated, that their grievances could not be made a party question, that they were a small body, that the Church was rich enough to exempt them from its taxation, and that they should be freed from the harassing prosecutions of the past. On both sides of the House the Quakers found friends. Accordingly a bill was drawn up with the object of releasing them from many of their former grievances, and, in spite of the opposition of the Church, successfully carried through the House of Commons. Unfortunately its fate was very different in the Upper House. The bill appears to have been prepared with great slovenliness, and its imperfections were commented upon in a hostile spirit by the Lord Chancellor Hardwicke and the Lord Justice Talbot. Several of the peers who usually voted with the Government were also opposed to the nature of the relief prayed, and entered their names as non-contents. But the chief enemies of the proposed reform were to be found seated on the bench of Bishops. The right reverend brethren, led by Gibson, the accomplished Bishop of London, a personal friend of Walpole, strongly denounced the measure, and their eloquence was so effective that when the question was put for committing the bill it was negatived by a majority of 54 against 35.*

We are told that the irritation of Walpole at the rejection of this bill was excessive, and that the Bishop of

* Coxe. Debates, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1736.

London was made to suffer for his hostility by the entire withdrawal of the minister's friendship and support. Gibson had been called the heir-apparent of the see of Canterbury, but on the death of Archbishop Wake, Bishop Potter, a man in every way inferior to the Bishop of London, was translated to the vacant dignity. That the Bench should have endeavoured to thwart a measure disapproved of by the clergy was to be expected, but the opposition of the Lord Chancellor is not so easily explained. Hardwicke had been promoted to the House of Lords especially to defend the Government against the formidable Tory and disaffected party; and yet he was the first to find fault with a bill that had been introduced by the Prime Minister, and that had obtained the confidence of the House of Commons. He was one of Walpole's friends, so there is no need to suppose any feelings of spite or jealousy at work on his part in denouncing the scheme.

The disagreement affords, however, a curious instance of the loose and disconnected manner in which parliamentary government was conducted in those days. We should have thought that the Lord Chancellor, as the great legal luminary of the kingdom, would have been consulted as to the phraseology of a bill dealing somewhat with legal-matters, but it is evident from the remarks he let fall that the measure had been drawn up by Walpole, and passed through the Commons without his opinion having been asked or invited. There was then no unanimity in the Cabinet, and it did not follow that because one minister advocated a certain policy his colleague was bound to support it. Both Lords Hardwicke and Talbot opposed the bill because they considered its enactments

unwise, and not to be approved of; nor was such opposition thought dishonourable or inimical to the welfare of the Cabinet of which they formed a part. At the present day the open hostility of a Lord Chancellor to a measure introduced by the Prime Minister, supposing the etiquette of the Constitution allowed it to take place, would be attended with the most serious consequences to the Government. It is a matter of surprise that Walpole, who was so jealous of any interference with his authority, should not have remonstrated with his legal colleagues on the course they pursued. Carteret and Chesterfield had been dismissed for less. Perhaps the Opposition in the House of Lords was so formidable that the talent of men like Hardwicke and Talbot could not easily be replaced. The Bishop of London was thus made the scapegoat.

But graver matters were now in store to harass the minister. Parliament had been dissolved, and the King, heedless of the remonstrances of Walpole, had retired to Hanover, there to bathe in the smiles of his favourite mistress. The Queen and her trusty adviser were thus left in charge of the affairs of the country, and to rule as they best thought fit. Though the Session of 1736 had closed peaceably, and the King had congratulated his subjects on the prospects of the future, yet there was no little agitation abroad. The harvest had been bad, and corn riots had broken out in the West, to prevent the exportation of grain, which required the aid of the military to suppress. In London great disaffection prevailed among the lower classes, owing to the labour-market being overstocked with Irish who agreed to work at lower rates than the English. Riots occurred at Spitalfields, and troops had to be called

out to restore order.* Along the coasts smuggling was greatly on the increase, and the conflicts that ensued between the Revenue officers and the sailors engaged in the contraband trade were almost deserving of the name of battles. These matters occupied no little of the time and attention of Walpole.

But the worst news came from Scotland. In Edinburgh the people had openly defied the law, and treated the Queen's warrant with contempt. A smuggler, named Wilson, awaiting his execution within the Tolbooth, had enlisted the sympathies of the mob by a certain amount of heroism in his conduct. On the day appointed for the dread sentence to be carried out a vast throng assembled round the gallows. The authorities, fearful of a disturb-

* "It has been customary," writes the Duke of Newcastle to Lord Waldegrave, "for some years past, for numbers of Irishmen to come over to England, to work in the harvest; and some of these people having from time to time been employed as journeymen by the master weavers and other artificers in Spittlefields and the adjacent parts, and having hired themselves for that purpose at lower rates than are usually given to journeymen in England, many of the poorer sort of people (who by this means found that they should either want employment, or be obliged to work for less wages than they were used to do), on the 27th past, gathered together in a tumultuous manner, and attacked a public-house in Spittlefields, where the Irishmen used to resort and to eat, the windows and doors of which they broke, and drove the inhabitants out of it; and the same night they also attacked another house in the like manner and upon the same account.

"The magistrates immediately assembled together, and gave directions for raising the militia; but as it would require some time before they could get ready to march, they applied for the assistance of a party of the Tower guard; and the commanding officer accordingly sent out a small detachment, at the first appearance of which the mob immediately dispersed, and were quiet for that night. During this whole disturbance the cry of the mob was against the Irish, and no mark of disaffection to the Government appeared. However, as it was thought necessary that the earliest and most effectual care should be taken for putting a stop to these riotous proceedings, the number of the Tower guard was increased, and small parties of them and the militia patroled for some nights in those parts where the disturbances had happened. This had so good an effect that (except on Friday the 30th past, when the mob attempted to gather together again, but were immediately dispersed, and some of the rioters secured, who have been since committed to Newgate) every thing has been perfectly quiet. The militia is now discharged, and for several nights past there has been no patrol in the streets, nor any appearance of the least attempt to make any further disturbance."—"Walpole Papers," August 5, 1736.

ance, stationed a large detachment of the city guard, under their Captain, John Porteous, close to the scene of execution, to protect the hangman in the performance of his wretched duties. At first these precautions seemed unnecessary. Except howling and hooting, the mob allowed the law to be carried into effect. But when the unhappy man was seen swinging from the gibbet the animus of the rabble broke out. The hangman was received with jeers of execration. Large stones were flung at the soldiers. The surging mass endeavoured to press upon the troops and reach the scaffold. A cry was raised to rescue the body, and at the same time threats were hurled against the civic powers. Irritated beyond control at these proceedings, and forgetful of that discipline which his command required, Porteous seized a musket and fired upon the rioters. The soldiers followed his example; a panic ensued, and the mob fled, leaving behind them several of their numbers either dead or wounded.

For this hasty and unnecessary act Porteous was tried before the High Court of Justiciary and found guilty of murder. On his sentence reaching London the Queen, guided by the opinion of Walpole, interfered. Porteous had acted with great indiscretion and want of self-control, but he had been greatly provoked, his men had been assailed, and the mob, had they not been dispersed, evidently meant mischief. The Captain was to be blamed for not having endeavoured to suppress the tumult without proceeding at once to extreme measures; still that he should suffer the last penalty of the law for having erred in his duty was a punishment far outweighing the offence. Accordingly a reprieve was sent down to Edinburgh. When the mob heard that their victim was to escape the most

violent expressions of indignation broke out on every side. The Canongate was mad with fury. Secret meetings were held amongst the rioters, and at last it was resolved that no royal reprieve should step in between them and the man who had shot down their brethren. The result of this determination is well known. The mob, armed with halberds and Lochaber axes, forced the gates of the Tolbooth, seized the unhappy prisoner, hustled him to the Grass-market, and hanged him from a dyer's pole. Then, when their rough revenge had been satisfied, they dispersed to their own homes, flinging the arms they had taken from the city guards into the gutters of the now silent streets.

When the news of this lawless act reached London the greatest excitement prevailed. Questions were indignantly asked. Why did the Lord Provost take no steps to crush such a rising? Why was General Moyle, who commanded the King's troops quartered in the suburbs, inactive? Why were the magistrates of the city supine? It afterwards became known that Moyle, with the fate of Porteous before his eyes, had declined to march down his men until he had received the necessary warrant from the city authorities, and that the magistrates had deputed Lindsay, the member for the city, to deliver the document, but that Lindsay was at the time either too drunk or too frightened of exposing his life (the evidence on this point is conflicting) to perform the duty required of him. As usual the two chief culprits cast the blame upon each other. Moyle accused Lindsay of disobeying orders, whilst Lindsay blamed the commanding officer for being inactive.

"You will have received," writes Sir Robert Walpole * to his brother Horace, who was in attendance upon the

* "Walpole Papers," September 20, 1736. Coxe.

King at Hanover, "by the last post from the Duke of Newcastle, an account of the horrible outrage committed last week at Edinburgh. The letter from Lord Justice Clerk and the narration that came with it are all the accounts that have come as yet to the hands of the Government; by which you will observe that the magistrates had not then received any information, or made, or attempted to make, the least discovery of any of the authors or ringleaders of this barbarous murder. It appears, by some private letters, that the whole villainy was begun and perpetrated in two hours; and that the mob dispersed of themselves as soon as their work was done, and flung down and left all the arms that they had seized in the guard-room in the Grass-market, the place of their vile execution; so that all things seem, at present, as quiet at Edinburgh as if nothing had happened.

"This leaves nothing to be done immediately, but to use all possible means to discover the criminals, and to take effectual care, if they are discovered, that they may be secured and brought to condign punishment. For the first purpose, the most peremptory orders to the magistrates, attended with ample rewards and encouragements, must be given, and a sufficient force placed in the Castle and suburbs of the city, with proper and necessary orders to defend and assist the civil power in putting the laws in execution, if any discoveries can be made and convictions obtained upon them.

"But here lie my greatest apprehensions, that we have, as yet, no prospect of coming at either, altho' it is impossible but the chief agents must be known to great numbers of people. But so great a panic seized them at the time, and such a terror seems to me to continue upon them, that

I very much fear it will be difficult to persuade them to do any thing that may expose them again to the same ill-consequences. I speak this as my own private observations; notwithstanding which, I think nothing must be omitted that can possibly be done to make examples of such an unheard-of attempt.

"Lord Isla goes for Scotland this week; and I think is determined to exert himself to the utmost upon this occasion. The Queen's orders are likewise sent to General Wade to repair immediately to Scotland, to countenance and assist the Government in their further proceedings."

The task which Lord Isla had agreed to undertake was no easy one. Rewards, bribes, and threats were freely offered, yet no disclosures of importance were made to the Government. "It is a great concern to me," writes Lord Isla to Walpole,* "to find it so difficult hitherto to make discoveries of the murderers. I am sure there is all the pains taken in it that is possible, and I never before had the pleasure to see all the King's servants here act so uniformly together in the discharge of their duty. On the other side, the secret patrons of the mob seem to be as busy in preparing false evidence to acquit the criminals as we all can be to bring them to justice. They that are in prison have already in their mouths the names of persons who, they say, will swear to their innocence, that is, their accomplices in the murder will easily perjure themselves to save their friends. The most shocking circumstance is that it plainly appears the high-flyers of our Scotch Church have made this infamous murder a point of conscience. One of the actors went straight away to a country church, where the Sacrament was given to a vast

* "Walpole Papers," October 16, 1736. Coxe.

crowd of people, as the fashion is here, and there boasted of what he had done. All the lower ranks of the people, who have distinguished themselves by pretences to a superior sanctity, speak of this murder as the hand of God doing justice; and my endeavours to punish murderers are called grievous persecutions. I have conversed with several of the parsons, and I observe that none of those who are of the High party will call any crime the mob can commit by its proper name. Their manner of talking, were it universal, would extirpate religion out of the world for the good of humane society; and indeed I could hardly have given credit to the public reports of the temper of these saints, if I had not myself been witness of it, and been admonished by one of them to have regard to the divine attribute of mercy; in English, to protect the rebels and murderers.

"Under these and other difficulties, particularly the dread all the common people are in of being murdered if they make discoveries, the inquiry goes slowly on; but I cannot but hope that by degrees this matter will come to light. I have had great difficulty to prevent mischief between General Moyle and Mr. Lindsay. Moyle says that Lindsay was drunk, and never asked his assistance. Lindsay says that he told him he came from the magistrates to ask his assistance. I have, as far as it was in my power, enjoined silence upon this subject, or any other of the like nature. The behaviour of the magistrates was certainly worse than can well be imagined."

The hope expressed by Lord Isla that by degrees this matter would "come to light" was never realised. Even to this day the ringleaders of the Porteous riot are unknown. The inquiry of the Government was the most fruitless

of investigations. Witnesses were examined, suspected people arrested, general proclamations issued; still nothing was divulged. The names of the leaders, the meetings that were held, the whole organization of the insurrection were enveloped in the deepest mystery. From the silence preserved and the success that attended upon the riot, it was evident that the mob was not composed of the dregs of the populace, but that its leaders were men who had excellent reasons for keeping their names in the background. Cardinal Fleury read the story of the revolt aright when he told Lord Waldegrave that the outbreak "could hardly have been executed with so much address had there not been better hands than the mob to conduct it."* Who these *better hands* were it was impossible for Lord Isla to discover, and seeing that nothing of note could be elicited he returned south.

It was the advice of Fleury to "drop the matter, and not to be too inquisitive;" but the Queen, irritated beyond measure at the failure of Isla's mission, was resolved upon revenge. If Edinburgh could not find out and restrain its disaffected, the city itself should suffer. The next session a bill was brought in by the Government proposing to annul the city charter, to raze the city gates, to disband the city guard, and to degrade the Lord Provost. These extreme measures were little approved of by Walpole, who dared not, however, thwart the indignation of the Queen. But the royal vengeance was not to be gratified. In both Houses of Parliament the Scotch, supported by many of the English, members raised so loud a cry against the bill that when it issued from committee its sweeping clauses had been cut down to two simple

* Lord Waldegrave to Walpole, October 23, 1736. Coxe.

provisions—the one rendering Watson, the then Lord Provost, incapable of ever holding any public office, and the other granting a pension of £2,000 to Mrs. Porteous. Thus ended an affair which caused no little disturbance at the time, and which has since remained one of the few mysteries History has been unable to clear up.

CHAPTER IX.

A DOMESTIC FEUD. 1737.

On the 1st of February, 1737, the third session of the new Parliament was opened by commission, the King, owing to his severe passage from Hanover, being unable to attend in person. The Houses had scarcely assembled when Pulteney rose up to make a motion which had been a frequent topic of conversation in London society during the past winter, and from which Walpole had anticipated no small annoyance. We have already said that the family of Hanover was notorious for its estrangement between father and son. The picture it presents during three generations of paternal jealousy and filial disaffection is not a pleasant one. As George the Second, when Prince of Wales, did all in his power to irritate his father —aimed at popularity, became the leader of the Opposition, kept a rival court, and was ever a thorn in the side of the old King—so Frederick, Prince of Wales, now pursued the same tactics, and was as much a source of anxiety and ill-feeling to George the Second as George the Second when heir-apparent had been to George the First.

Of Frederick little can be said that is favourable. With the exception of the family courage that he possessed in an eminent degree, the baser part of human nature was the stronger within him. He was weak, spiteful,

obstinate, mean, and as openly immoral in his private life as both his father and grandfather had been before him. Educated in Germany, he had not been allowed to come over to England during the earlier days of his youth, and it was not until frequent remonstrances had been made to the King of the evils that would attend the heir-apparent if he should be entirely ignorant of the country over which he was one day to rule that the father allowed his jealousy to give way to the wise counsels of his advisers. On his arrival in England the Prince soon showed the world the nature of the relationship that existed between sire and son. He seldom spoke to the King, and was frequently brutally rude to the Queen, who seems to have hated her eldest born as cordially as did her consort. He entered into the confidences of the Opposition, and was moved as its presiding spirits, Bolingbroke and Pulteney, chose to pull the strings. His father hating literature and the fine arts, the Prince affected to be a scholar and a virtuoso, and extended his patronage to struggling authors, artists, and sculptors, by whom he was in return praised in pamphlets, flattered in pictures, and modelled in busts. In contrast to the seclusion of the King, the Prince was to be seen constantly walking about in the streets, or driving in the park, or ogling the women from the theatre. By these arts and devices he acquired a certain popularity, and when, in the April of 1736, he was united to the Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, the nation cordially welcomed the bride and was loud in its shouts of congratulation to the bridegroom.

The marriage gave the Opposition an opportunity of harassing the King and annoying the minister, which it was not slow to take advantage of. The friends of the

Prince had advised him to bring the question of his income before Parliament. He was told that an unsettled allowance of some fifty thousand a year doled out to him by his father was unworthy of his position, and insufficient to meet the constant demands upon his purse. This slender portion had latterly been a fruitful subject of conversation between the heir-apparent and the Opposition. Bolingbroke, before quitting England, had advised the Prince to set the King openly at defiance and boldly to ask Parliament for a permanent income of one hundred thousand a year. When George the First was King, and the Civil List but £700,000, the Prince of Wales had then been allowed one hundred thousand a year. How unjust was it now, with a Civil List of £800,000, for the heir-apparent to the throne to receive but a beggarly fifty thousand a year? This advice was only too agreeable not to be followed. The Prince resolved to appeal to the first Parliament that assembled after his marriage for the settlement of an income suitable to his position and to the increased expenditure of his household. The matter was mentioned to the Opposition and warmly approved of. Pulteney promised his support; Wyndham answered for the Tories; whilst Sir John Barnard, who was a host in himself, said that the measure would only be an act of common justice. One dissentient voice was, however, raised. Dodington, afterwards Lord Melcombe, earnestly used his influence with Frederick to prevent him from dragging his private differences into public notice, and thus compelling every member in the House to make an invidious choice between the parent and the son. But the Prince declined to be moved from his purpose, and gave no heed to the prudent advice of his counsellor.

As soon as Walpole heard of the intention of the Prince he realised to the full the embarrassing situation in which he, as First Minister of the Crown, was placed. The King was in delicate health—all the more delicate from the gross dissipation in which he indulged—and any week might see the heir-apparent called to the throne. To gratify the Prince and yet not anger the King was one of the most delicate of tasks. Walpole, however, thought he saw a way of extricating himself from his difficult position. He advised the King to settle upon the Prince of Wales the £50,000 a year which he now received in irregular monthly payments, and at the same time to agree to the settlement of a jointure, the amount of which was left open, upon the Princess of Wales. Both George and Caroline, indignant at the rebellious conduct of their son, were at first strongly averse to this proposal, but on Walpole assuring their Majesties that the submission of this offer to the Prince would place the heir-apparent in no little difficulty, for if he refused he would be considered undutiful as well as ungrateful, whilst if he accepted the sovereign would get credit for generosity, they finally consented. To the Lord Chancellor was intrusted the duty of laying the proposal before the Prince. With all due ceremony Hardwicke called upon Frederick, and informed him of the nature of his mission. The Prince was all softness and hypocrisy. He begged to lay himself, with due humility, at the King's feet; he should ever retain the utmost duty for his royal father; he was very thankful for any instance of his Majesty's goodness to him, or to the Princess, and especially for his Majesty's gracious intention of settling a jointure upon his Royal Highness; but—and here was the sting of the answer—the affair

was now out of his hands, and therefore he could give no reply.

To whom the affair was intrusted was soon evident. On the very next day—the 22nd of February—Pulteney made his motion in the House of Commons, in the form of an address, desiring the King to settle £100,000 a year on the Prince of Wales, and the same jointure upon the Princess as the Queen herself had enjoyed when Princess of Wales; and assuring his Majesty that the House would enable him effectually to perform the same. The speech of the leader of the Opposition was, as was to be expected, clever, subtle, and plausible. He stated that the Prince, as heir-apparent to the Crown, had a claim, founded on law and precedent, to the proposed allowance. He said that when the Civil List was granted to George the First, and afterwards increased in the reign of his present Majesty, it had been so granted and increased on the condition that, out of that revenue, a sum of £100,000 should be reserved for the maintenance of a permanent and independent establishment for the Prince of Wales. He sketched the history of several former heirs-apparent to the Crown, showing that they all had received separate and permanent allowances, and that the case of Prince Frederick was the solitary exception to the rule. In conclusion, whilst regretting the necessity of parliamentary interference in so delicate a matter, he denied that such conduct was in any way a trespassing upon the just prerogative of the Crown. Barnard briefly seconded the proposal.

Walpole rose up to reply. He was in a position in which it was useless now to temporise. He must make his choice between two masters, and he chose the father, who now wore the Crown, to the son, who at some

future day might be called upon to wear it. Confident in his own ability, and well aware how useful he was, as a minister, to a reigning sovereign, he may have thought, that though his opposition to the motion of Pulteney would all the more increase the hatred of the Prince towards him, yet when Frederick should be summoned to the throne History might again repeat itself. Who had more bitterly disliked him than George the Second when Prince of Wales? Yet Compton had soon been forced to resign the seals of office. When Frederick ascended the throne, why should not the same tactics succeed as had succeeded when the first George passed away, and the second George had been summoned to reign in his stead? Both Bolingbroke and the Duchess of Marlborough were astounded that so astute a man as Walpole should have opposed the proposal of Pulteney. Yet there is little cause for astonishment. The King detested his son with a bitterness scarcely possible to conceive, and he was resolved, even at the risk of dethronement, not to increase the allowance of the Prince. Thus there was no middle course open to Walpole. He must either offend the King or offend the Prince. He preferred to offend the Prince, and to leave the future to itself. At the present moment the King was his master, and he would serve him, as he had always served him, faithfully though selfishly, loyally though interestedly. When the Prince should become his master he did not despair of Frederick, under his skilful hands, becoming another George the Second, of Augusta becoming another Caroline, and of Pulteney becoming another Compton. What had happened once, under similar circumstances, might again be repeated.

Walpole began his speech by saying that never had he

risen with greater reluctance or deeper concern than at the present moment. The motion before the House placed all in a most invidious position. If they voted for it they seemed to injure his Majesty, whilst if they opposed it they seemed to pass a slight upon the wishes of the heir-apparent of the Crown. Still it was incumbent upon all to do their duty, and he, for his part, would not hesitate freely to express his opinions, feeling sure from his personal knowledge of his Majesty and of his Royal Highness that neither of them would think himself injured by the frank utterances of any member holding sincere opinions on the subject. With this prelude, Walpole at once proceeded to deal with the question before the House. He maintained that the sovereign had a perfect right to dispose of the Civil revenues as he thought fit, and that it was both an encroachment upon the privileges of the Crown and an indecent interference of Parliament to dictate to the King upon the management of the royal family. In his opinion, the allowance of £50,000 a year, exclusive of the revenues arising from the Duchy of Cornwall, was a fair and just income for his Royal Highness, nor did he see how his Majesty could well afford more out of the Civil List. He denied that the Prince had any claim founded on law, good policy, or precedent for the increase that was now demanded. It was not true that when the Civil List was granted to the King any stipulation was agreed upon for the Prince to receive an additional £50,000 a year. No such allusion had ever been made, for the Civil List had been granted unconditionally to his Majesty. He disputed the accuracy of the precedents justifying parliamentary interposition brought forward by Pulteney. With the exception of the

single instance during the reign of Henry VI., whose rule was so weak and shifting that it became necessary for Parliament to assume certain rights and privileges to which it was not strictly entitled, no such precedent had existed. In conclusion, he discussed the impropriety of the Legislature interfering in a domestic matter of this kind, and severely blamed those who hoped to make political capital by creating a breach between father and son. He regretted that such a motion had ever been brought before the House; it was a solitary instance of its kind; it was based on no foundation whatever; the arguments supporting it were easily disproved, and he should vote against the measure.

The views of the Opposition were, however, largely entertained by a numerous body in the House, and Pulteney's motion was only rejected by a majority of thirty. Had Sir William Wyndham succeeded in carrying out his resolution of obtaining the support of his party, Walpole would have sustained a defeat. But of the Tories who recognised Wyndham as their leader, forty-five regarded the interference of Parliament on such an occasion as so opposed to the principles of the English Constitution, and so dangerous a precedent to establish, that they quitted the House before the division. A few days later the same motion came on before the House of Lords, but was rejected by a large majority. Still, in spite of the refusal of the Legislature, there were many in the country who held that the allowance of the Prince should be increased, and that his state of dependence upon his father was harsh and unjustifiable.* Ballads and pamphlets took up

* "His Royal Highness before he married had £24,000 a year from the King; his table kept for him, which was valued by themselves at £15,000 a year; and

the cause of the Prince, and to those interested in the literature of scurrility the lampoons and epigrams vomited forth from the garrets of Grub Street upon Sir Robert Walpole will afford considerable gratification. The minister was abused, ridiculed, and handed down to scorn with a keenness that does credit to the power of invective, though little to the civilisation and good taste of the age.

Nor did Walpole fare much better in his opposition to a financial scheme proposed by Sir John Barnard. Into the details of this measure we need not now enter; it will be sufficient for our purpose briefly to state that the proposal of Sir John had for its object the borrowing of money at three per cent., and the redemption of certain annuities, for which a higher rate was annually paid.* The result of the adoption of this plan, it was said, would lead to the extension of commerce and the improvement of agriculture. Opinion was fairly divided upon the subject. The landed interest cordially approved of it, whilst the commercial classes and the capitalists were its antagonists. At first Walpole had been in favour of the scheme, but on reflection he discovered its drawbacks, and voted against it. "The measure," he said, "is founded on plausible assumptions, that it is better to pay three than

£9,000 a year from Cornwall, which make together £48,000 a year. Then deduct £1,800 for fees, &c., which reduced it to £46,000, and it will appear that he had but £8,800 a year to pay for all the additional expense and charges which are necessary to support a Princess of Wales and all her family, suitable to her high rank and dignity as well as the expectations of the nation—though she is now to have £50,000 a year to maintain herself and family without the Prince, if she and we should be so unfortunate as to lose him; and yet that no more should be given to support them *both* than the £9,000 a year from the Duchy of Cornwall must occasion reflections too invidious to be mentioned."—*Gentleman's Magazine*, June, 1737.

* The motion was that "his Majesty be enabled to raise money, either by sale of annuities for years or lives, at such rates as should be prescribed, or by borrowing at an interest not exceeding three per cent., to be applied towards redeeming old and new South Sea Annuities, and that such of the annuitants as should be inclined to subscribe their respective annuities should be preferred to all others."

four per cent., and that it is desirable to discharge the debt of the nation. These positions are undoubtedly true; but the question is, whether the method proposed to effect them is just and adequate? We must take care not to confound public necessity with public utility. Public utility differs essentially from profit or benefit gained to the public; for when profit accrues to the public, at the expense of many individuals, it loses all claim to consideration under the title of public utility. This House, in carefully attending to their duty as guardians of the national purse, must not forget that they are trustees for the creditors. We must not assume a right to prejudice the public creditors, or to convert the right of redemption which we possess, into a right of reduction, to which we have no claim. Debts not originally subject to reduction are, in that respect, in the situation of irredeemables, and the faith of Parliament is equally pledged to prevent any reduction without the consent of the proprietors. If we advert to the time and manner in which these debts were created, every argument against the reduction of interest acquires a great additional force. At that disastrous period the creditors of the South Sea and East India Companies had a power to demand the whole amount of their bonds. Their forbearance was essentially necessary to the defence and well-being of the community; for, had they persisted in claiming their principal, the whole must have fallen on the landed interest, or the result must have been such as I dare not mention or hardly think of. And is the service then rendered to the country to be now repaid by a compulsory reduction of their dividends? I call it compulsory, for any reduction by terror can only be described by that name. If they are to be so reduced, the

pretence is, that it will ease the current service, or take off taxes; but that would be only to take the taxes off others, to be imposed on them, in the most cruel and insupportable manner. It would be equally just to take away one-fourth from the income of every individual, or to deprive him of one-fourth of his lands or stock-in-trade; or rather the injustice would be less in such case, because the national creditor is, by express contract, exempt from all public taxes and impositions."

He then exposed the injustice of the scheme, by showing how it would "mark out all the great companies," and "benefit the borrowers at the expense of the lenders;" and how it reversed the whole system of the Sinking Fund. He thus concluded:

"The declared intention of the bill is to give ease to the subject, and the title specifies *immediate* ease. But its tendency is calculated to violate this very principle, and to falsify the title, for no ease can be given until the reduction has taken place, and that event is distant, uncertain, and precarious. In fact, the present disadvantages of the scheme, proposed by the honourable gentleman, evidently appear from the affectation with which he expatiated on *his love to posterity*. For certain it is that his scheme cannot benefit the present generation, but its salutary effects will principally be confined to those who are yet unborn." The proposal of Barnard was rejected by 249 against 134.*

The reasons which led Walpole to oppose this measure are evident. If the country could afford to wait, he thought the bill a wise one; but he preferred to benefit the present generation than a future one. The reduction of the land tax had pleased the Country party, the rejection of Barnard's

* Coxe, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1737.

scheme would propitiate the moneyed interest. Had the bill passed, it would have prevented him from making encroachments upon the Sinking Fund, which would, from the nature of the bill, be necessarily locked up; and it was the intention of Walpole, rather than impose new taxes, to take from the Sinking Fund whenever money was required to carry on the government. The Sinking Fund was too useful a bank to have its doors barred against the Treasury. Above all, a far-sighted minister like Walpole, ready for any complications that might arise, clearly saw that, if it ever became necessary for the Government to borrow, money could be obtained far easier at four per cent. than at three per cent. Still, by those who were in favour of the measure of Sir John Barnard —and they formed a good number—the minister was roundly abused for his opposition. It was said that he was aware the bill was an excellent measure, but that he had rejected it because he was jealous that any one but himself should introduce financial reforms. Others insinuated that he intended the bill to pass, and only bided his time till the Queen, who was supposed to have a million in the funds, had sold out at a good profit. Hence the usual pamphlets covered the bookstalls, and the usual ballads were sung in the streets, against the meanness, the tyranny, and the corruption of the Government, and especially against that "designing monster," S—r R—t W—le.

But one form of abuse Walpole was determined to put down with a strong hand. Ever since the Restoration the stage had been degraded into an arena for all that was loose, false, and scurrilous. Pure comedy had degenerated into indecent farce; sparkling dialogue had been exchanged

for the plainest of *doubles entendres;* love and sensuality were considered synonymous; virtue had been expelled, and vice, with its new code of morals, reigned in her stead. Not a play was acted but subverted the whole principles of domestic life—the husband was a fool, and always deceived; the gallant was all that was gay, handsome, and fascinating; the wife was never so witty and agreeable as when she broke her vows and excused her errors. To be pure of life, to be honest, to strive against the baser instincts, to be noble and good, were then never inculcated by actor or author. Wycherley, Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, Dryden, and Mrs. Aphra Behn were the favourites of the day; and their style was imitated by scores of playwrights who had all the pruriency of their models without a spark of their genius.

Such was the social aspect of dramatic literature; nor was the political aspect a whit better. During the earlier years of the Georgian era the stage, in the absence of a cheap press, was the great vehicle for political satire and invective. Did a Government introduce an unpopular measure—straightway the dramatic author cudgelled his brains, and a play appeared libelling, under the flimsiest of disguises and in the most audacious manner, those who ruled the State. Had a minister an impediment in his speech, or some other physical defect, it was copied by the actor. Was he unhappy at his home, spiteful scenes from his domestic life were reproduced on the stage. Were there any good stories current about him, they were introduced in the dialogue of the play, so that not even the most stupid listener in the pit could escape the application. No one had more suffered in this respect than Walpole. He had been brought upon the stage under various forms

of scurrilous caricature: his personal peculiarities had been malignantly mimicked, his speeches had been burlesqued, his loyalty to the Queen had been offensively commented upon; indeed, though in every capital in Europe Walpole was regarded as one of the greatest of living statesmen, to the London playgoer he was a robber, a pimp, a turncoat, a *cocu*, a knave, and a liar.

Though far from being sensitive to public ridicule, the minister determined to cleanse the stage from its Augean filth of social and political impurity. An opportunity soon offered. Giffard, the manager of Goodman's Fields Theatre, brought him a farce called *The Golden Rump*, which had been offered for representation. Whether Giffard wished to ask the advice of Walpole on the occasion, or to extort money to prevent the appearance of the play, we know not. The minister, however, purchased the farce and studied its contents. A brief perusal was sufficient to convince him of the scandalous nature of its pages. He then summoned certain of the more prominent members on both sides of the House and read aloud a few extracts from the farce. It was unanimously resolved that it was high time to put a check to the blasphemy, sedition, and licentiousness which threatened to wreck modern comedy and usher in the ruin of morality. Party feeling agreed to lay aside its organized opposition and support the minister in his efforts of amelioration.

Thus assisted, Walpole brought in his celebrated Playhouse Bill under the guise of an amendment to the Vagrant Act. It was entitled "A Bill to explain and amend so much of an Act made in the twelfth year of the Reign of Queen Anne, intituled 'An Act for reducing the Laws relating to Rogues, Vagabonds, Sturdy Beggars, and Vagrants, and

sending them whither they ought to be sent,' as relates to the Common Players of interludes." It declared that any actor without a legal settlement or a licence from the Lord Chamberlain should be considered a rogue and a vagabond. It empowered the Lord Chamberlain to prohibit the representation of any play at his discretion, and rendered it compulsory upon all authors to send copies of their dramas, comedies, or farces, a fortnight before they were acted, to the Lord Chamberlain under a penalty of a fine of fifty pounds, and of forfeiting the licence of the theatre. By an amendment of Sir John Barnard, who had taken much interest in this question, and two years before had introduced a bill to restrain the number of theatres, it was further provided that no person should be authorised to act except within the liberties of Westminster and where the King should reside.

The bill was passed with great rapidity through both Houses—less than a month being sufficient to consider its details and enrol it on the Statute Book. With the exception of Lord Chesterfield, who made a brilliant speech against the measure, predicting the ruin of freedom and the introduction of tyranny should the bill ever become law, neither in the House of Commons nor in the House of Lords was there any opposition to Walpole's scheme. In neither chamber does there appear to have been a division upon it; nor from the public outside was a single petition presented.

In spite of the prophecies of Lord Chesterfield—that the Lord Chamberlain's department would be a "new Excise office," and that a similar restriction upon the liberty of the press would inevitably follow, for it was impossible, he said, for him to conceive that a libel in the form of a play should

be prohibited, whilst a libel in the form of a satire, a tale, or a secret history should be permitted to circulate throughout the land, "and then," added the author of the famous Letters, "we may bid adieu to the liberties of Great Britain"—these evils have never been realised. During the bitter hostilities that prevailed among parties in the reigns of the Third and Fourth Georges the stage was kept free from the scurrilities of the past, whilst wit, relieved from the impurities that clouded it, shone out with redoubled brilliancy. Had it not been for Walpole's bill, how foul would have been the personalities of the stage, how seditious its innuendoes, how unmeasured its strictures, at seasons of crisis like the Jacobite rising, the arrest of Wilkes, the American revolt, the anti-Popery riots, the trial of Queen Caroline, the opposition to the Reform Bill, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws! The "new Excise office" has, in the past, been a most important department of the Government, exercising on all occasions a careful yet tolerant criticism; whether, at the present day, when the abuses complained of by Walpole would not be permitted for a moment by any audience, it would not be wiser to annul some of the clauses of this Playhouse Bill, and leave the supervision of the stage to the good taste of the public, is a question which may reasonably be raised, and one which the Legislature, perhaps at no distant period, may be pleased to answer in the affirmative. Still, be the issue what it may, the English theatre owes a debt of gratitude to Walpole. His bill has expelled a Mrs. Aphra Behn from the boards, whilst it has encouraged a Goldsmith, a Sheridan, and a Lytton.

Shortly after the passing of the Playhouse Bill Parliament was dissolved. Walpole had intended going down to Houghton, where his wife was lying sick, but the divisions

in the royal family required his continued attendance in town. Irritated at his defeat in the House of Commons upon the motion for an increase in his income, the Prince of Wales was determined, with that petty spite which is the vengeance of weak natures, to cause all the annoyance in his power to the King and Queen. He was then living with his wife at Hampton Court, where the royal family were residing. To those interested in the details of domestic discord, the account preserved in the pages of Lord Hervey of the conduct of this happy party, all assembled under one roof, all hating each other, yet concealing, out of etiquette, the bitterness of their dislike, will contain passages not always to be found in the literature of scandal and gossip.

An opportunity, the last a man of any feeling would have chosen, presented itself for the Prince to pass a slight upon his father and mother. The Princess of Wales was *enceinte.* On the last day of July, when the pains of travail had attacked her, the Prince, without giving any intimation to the King and Queen as to his proceedings, hurried his unhappy wife from Hampton Court to St. James's Palace, where she was delivered, shortly after her arrival, of a daughter. Nothing was prepared at the Palace, and we are told that a couple of table-cloths had to do duty as sheets. The newly born infant was, according to Lord Hervey, "a little rat no bigger than a toothpick." Meanwhile at Hampton Court the utmost ignorance prevailed upon the subject of the flight. The King was downstairs playing at *commerce* with the Princess Amelia. The Queen was at quadrille in another chamber, whilst the Princess Caroline and Lord Hervey were playing cribbage. At ten o'clock they all retired to bed, and it

was not till early in the morning that a courier arrived from St. James's announcing that the Princess of Wales was a mother.

The anger of the parents at the unworthy conduct of their son was deep in the extreme. He should feel their heaviest displeasure; they declared that so open and gratuitous an insult could not be passed over; and their indignation was shared by a large portion of the country. In the feud that now ensued public sympathy was evidently on the side of the parents. Even those who regarded the Prince as their tool, and always espoused his cause, blamed his proceedings on this occasion. "I am at a loss," writes Bolingbroke to Wyndham,* "I am at a loss to find the plausibility or the popularity of the present occasion of rupture. He hurries his wife from Court when she is on the point of being delivered of her first child. His father swells, struts, and storms. He confesses his rashness and asks pardon in the terms of one who owns himself in the wrong. Besides that all this appears to me boyish, it is purely domestic, and there is nothing, as far as I can discern, to interest the public in the cause of his Royal Highness."

So thoroughly had the Prince put himself in the wrong that, acting upon the advice of his friends, he now proceeded to apologise for his conduct. He said that the suddenness with which his wife was seized rendered it necessary to obtain immediate assistance, and that it was considered more prudent to return to London, where medical attendance could at once be obtained, than remain at Hampton Court, where there were no physicians. He begged the Queen, who had gone to visit her daughter-in-law, to make

* October 13, 1737. Coxe.

his excuses to the King for his abrupt departure, and to say that he would do himself the honour of waiting upon his Majesty and explain matters. To Sir Robert Walpole, who had been sent by the King to St. James's Palace, he was also profuse in his apologies.

But the King declined to be pacified. As the Prince had chosen to pass a slight upon his father in public, so the King would reprimand his son officially. Walpole was requested to draw up the necessary document, which was delivered to the Prince by Lord Essex, one of the Lords of the Bedchamber. It ran as follows: "The King has commanded me to acquaint your Royal Highness, that his Majesty most heartily rejoices at the safe delivery of the Princess, but that your carrying away her Royal Highness from Hampton Court, the then residence of the King, the Queen, and the family, under the pains and certain indications of immediate labour, to the imminent danger and hazard both of the Princess and her child, after sufficient warnings for a week before to have made the necessary preparations for this happy event, without acquainting his Majesty or the Queen with the circumstances the Princess was in, or giving them the least notice of your departure, is looked upon by the King to be such a deliberate indignity offered to himself and to the Queen that he has commanded me to acquaint your Royal Highness that he resents it to the highest degree."

On the receipt of this message the Prince again made the most abject apologies for his conduct, and begged to be restored to favour. The King, however, prompted by Walpole, who did all in his power to widen the breach between father and son, still refused to be conciliated. A second message was dispatched to the Prince. It was

sharp and stern. Walpole, true as always to his selfish policy, had come to the conclusion that it would be more advantageous to the establishment of his power for the feud between the King and the Prince to be open and acknowledged than to continue, as it had heretofore, latent and smouldering. He feared also that, hated as he was by the Prince, and denounced by the Opposition, the terms of reconciliation might be dependent upon his removal from office. Nor was he the man to allow danger to menace him. The Prince had put himself most grievously in the wrong; the King should therefore take every advantage of the opportunity offered him. It was useless entering into a cold and distant correspondence with the heir-apparent. Let the Prince know in a few severe words the nature of the enemy he had aroused. "There is nothing like taking it short at first," said Walpole.

His advice was acted upon. The Prince was informed that the professions he had lately made in his letters to the King of duty and devotion were so inconsistent with his conduct that his Majesty declined to be imposed upon by them. "This extravagant and undutiful behaviour," then continued the message, "in so essential a point as the birth of an heir to my crown, is such an evidence of your premeditated defiance of me, and such a contempt of my authority, and of the natural right belonging to your parents, as cannot be excused by the pretended innocence of your intentions, nor palliated or disguised by specious words only. But the whole tenor of your conduct, for a considerable time, has been so entirely void of all real duty to me that I have long had reason to be highly offended with you. And until you withdraw your regard and confidence from those by whose advice you are directed and

encouraged in your unwarrantable behaviour to me and to the Queen, and until you return to your duty, you shall not reside in my palace, which I will not suffer to be made the resort of them who, under the appearance of an attachment to you, foment the division which you have made in my family, and thereby weaken the common interest of the whole. In this situation I will receive no reply; but when your actions manifest a just sense of your duty and submission, *that* may induce me to pardon what at present I most justly resent. In the meantime it is my pleasure that you leave St. James's, with all your family, when it can be done without prejudice or inconvenience to the Princess. I shall for the present leave to the Princess the care of my grand-daughter, until a proper time calls upon me to consider of her education."

Thus, finding that all apologies and submissive epistles were powerless to soften the harshness of the King, the Prince quitted St. James's Palace, and took up his abode at Norfolk House in St. James's Square, which henceforward became the rendezvous of the leading members of the Opposition. To make the separation as public as possible, the King commanded that all the correspondence that had passed upon the occasion should be printed and distributed among the foreign ministers at home and the British ambassadors abroad. An order was also issued prohibiting all who attended the *levées* at Norfolk House from presenting themselves at Court. "Thank God!" said the King, "the puppy is out of my house!" "I hope in God," exclaimed the Queen, "I shall never see him again!"

Whilst this unhappy family feud was on every tongue, Walpole was hurried from the King's presence to Houghton,

where his wife, who had latterly been out of health, had breathed her last. To the husband the death of his wife could be regarded in no other light than as a release. Conjugal fidelity was not among the virtues of the great minister, and, if we are to credit contemporary gossip, a tacit understanding existed between the ill-assorted couple that each might go his or her way without any interference on the part of the other. Lady Walpole was a woman of fashion, fond of admiration, endowed with no small gifts of wit and repartee, and her society was much courted. It was an age when what was termed gallantry was recognised as one of the most necessary, as well as one of the most legitimate, forms of social distraction. For a man of *ton* to love his neighbour's wife was as ordinary a proceeding as it was for his neighbour's wife to drink tea, collect china, pet a monkey, and keep a Dutch mastiff. To be virtuous was to be provincial. In town no married woman was guilty; if her conduct was very outrageous, her breeding was at fault, not her morals. That Lady Walpole was not superior to her age in this culpable liberty must, we think, be allowed. Carr, Lord Hervey, had the reputation of being her favourite, and Horace Walpole, the lettered fop and the antiquarian fribble, was believed by society to be his son. It is, therefore, but to encourage hypocrisy to pretend that, under these circumstances, there could have been much affection between Sir Robert and Lady Walpole, and that the loss of his wife could have been regarded as a domestic affliction by the husband. His conduct at the time is the best proof of the nature of his regrets. A few brief weeks had barely elapsed since the death of Lady Walpole, when the widower was united to the mistress who had openly lived

with him during the lifetime of his wife.* This second marriage is carefully concealed by Coxe.

By his union with Lady Walpole four children were born the minister: Robert, who was created Lord Walpole in the lifetime of his father, and succeeded the statesman as second Earl of Orford; Edward, a Knight of the Bath, and member for Lostwithiel, in Cornwall, who was the father of the celebrated Miss Walpoles of the next generation; Horace, the author of the Letters; Catherine, who died when young; and Mary, who married Viscount Malpas, afterwards third Earl of Cholmondeley.

His wife by his second marriage was his former mistress, Maria Skerritt. Who this lady was is not exactly known. By the peerages she is called Maria, daughter and sole heiress of Thomas Skerritt, Esq. This barren information is also supplemented by statements to the effect that she was the friend of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and that she had been Maid of Honour to Queen Caroline when Princess of Wales. Contemporary scandal does not, however, credit her with this respectability of position or connection. A certain famous poem, by the Duke of Wharton, begins—

> "Dear Lloyd, they say you're Walpole's ferret,
> To hunt out poor Molly Skerritt;
> And thus are grown by views sinister,
> A pimp to such a scrub minister."

And when Walpole led his late mistress to the altar the following offensive lampoon went the round of the coffee-houses :—

> "I can't conceive why, in decline of life,
> Sir Bluestring should betroth another wife.

* "It was reported, and is still believed by many, that Sir Robert Walpole, upon the loss of his wife, married Miss Skerritt, an honest woman; but if it be so the marriage is not yet owned."—Ford to Swift, Nov. 22, 1737. Swift's Works.

Is it because he feels an amorous rage,
Thus swell'd with fat, and thus excised with age?
He surely don't; in this believe me, friends,
He but pursues his ever-constant ends.
He, long inured to plunder and to fraud,
Unmoved by virtue, and by shame unawed,
Diverts to private use a public ———
And thus he robs the public one way more,
The only way he had not robbed before." *

From which we may gather that Maria Skerritt was neither of very lofty parentage nor praiseworthy behaviour.

But a death fraught with graver results to the minister than had followed upon the loss of his wife was now to take place. For many years the Queen had been a silent sufferer from an internal complaint, the nature of which she kept rigidly to herself. Whether from false delicacy or from a fear that if her husband knew of her disease it might inspire a dislike in him towards her, or whatever was the motive at work, she locked the secret of her malady within her own heart. Never, no matter at what cost to herself, did she exhibit any of the symptoms of the invalid before her husband. Though suffering agonies, she went the whole round of Court ceremonies —holding drawing-rooms, giving dinners, attending at State balls and concerts—without a murmur. The mere act of performing a curtsey was exquisitely painful to her, yet she never failed in offering this form of homage to her hard punctilious consort. Every morning she took her customary long walk with the King, and more than once, we are told by Horace Walpole, "when she had the gout in her foot, she dipped her whole leg in cold water to be ready to attend him. The pain, her bulk, and the exercise threw her into such fits of perspiration as routed

* Jesse's "Court of England for the Revolution," vol. iii. p. 398.

the gout; but those exertions hastened the crisis of her distemper."

At last, in spite of her will and fortitude, nature declared itself. Early in November she was seized with violent internal pains, and had to be carried to bed. Physicians were sent for, and the favourite expedients of the day were freely adopted. Mixtures and cordials were given her; she was bled; blisters were applied to her limbs, but with little good result. An obstruction that medicine seemed powerless to remove had supervened. The King recommended that a medical examination should take place. In spite of the jealousy with which the Queen guarded her secret it had been guessed by the King. Frequently the husband had exhorted his wife to acknowledge the nature of her malady to him, and to seek medical advice upon the subject, but Caroline declined to gratify his inquisitiveness, and at last had succeeded in making him promise never to mention the matter again without her consent. The King now thought it most desirable that those in attendance upon her Majesty should be made acquainted with her secret. He took Ranby, the surgeon, aside, and informed him of what he suspected. Under pretence of sounding the invalid, the surgeon cleverly availed himself of the opportunity of ascertaining what grounds there were for the King's suspicions. He found them corroborated.

At once the treatment proper for the special disease was adopted. But it was too late; what would have saved her life a few years back was now ineffectual. Her case was beyond the skill of science. The Queen, aware of her condition, waited with great calmness the issue. Those near and dear to her were around the bed. Her parting

with the King is a tragedy in burlesque. She embraced him, weeping bitterly: then, taking a ring from her finger, she put it upon that of her husband, tenderly saying, that whatever greatness or happiness she had enjoyed in life she owed all to him. Some return was still in her power to make for the affection she had received from him. After her death he would find that all she possessed had been left him. The King, deeply moved, for human nature teaches us that the most scandalous infidelity is not incompatible with warm marital affection, kissed his wife passionately, and murmured at his lonely future. As a compensation for his loss, the Queen begged him to marry again. "*Non, non*," sobbed the afflicted monarch, "*j'aurai des maîtresses! j'aurai des maîtresses!*" "*Eh, mon Dieu!*" exclaimed his easy consort, "*cela n'empêche pas.*" Did ever husband take such a farewell from the woman he loved? Did ever wife give such counsel? Nothing shows more plainly the state of the morality of those days than this death-bed separation.

Her parting with her children was more seemly. She embraced them affectionately, and especially to her favourite son, the Duke of Cumberland, gave advice full of weight and wisdom. But one child was conspicuous from his absence. The eldest son, the heir-apparent to the throne, was not included in the family group. Relentless to the last, the Queen refused permission to the Prince of Wales, even at so supreme a moment, to approach her. She knew, she said, he would come to her side assuming a deep grief, would "blubber like a calf" at seeing her thus, and then go back to his set and laugh at her. Nor were her severe remarks uncalled for. Whilst the Prince was sending messages of sympathy and affection to the palace,

and moaning over his exclusion, he was making merry with his friends at Carlton House. "We shall have good news soon," said this unnatural son, "she can't hold out much longer."

To Walpole, her faithful servant and confidential minister, she was then as always kind and grateful. She acknowledged how much she had been indebted to him for his counsels in the past, how loyal he had always shown himself in her cause, and how thankful she felt at leaving behind her one who could so ably guide and advise his sovereign. The parting on both sides was full of a sorrow that was real and sincere. Turning to the minister she said, "I hope you will never desert the King, but continue to serve him with your usual fidelity;" then, pointing to her husband, she added, "I recommend his Majesty to you." A strange appeal for a Queen to make to a subject in the presence of his sovereign; yet words which testify how highly she esteemed the ability of the minister and trusted in his judgment. Walpole was not a little alarmed lest this speech might prejudice his sovereign against him, not every monarch approving of being consigned to the protection of one of his ministers. But his fears were groundless. A few days after the death of Caroline the King received a letter in which it was stated he had lost his "sole protector." "It is false," said George, showing the letter to Walpole, with a smile, "for you remember that on her death-bed the Queen recommended *me* to you."

As it became evident that the Queen was now fast sinking, mortification having set in, those about her bed were anxious that her spiritual welfare should not be neglected. The religious views of Caroline had been

always somewhat heterodox, and it was her delight to perplex the divines about the throne with subtle questions touching their faith; she was therefore perfectly content to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death without priestly advice or intervention. Walpole, to whom religion was as incomprehensible as asceticism to an epicure, thought it, however, prudent that on such an occasion as the present a proper deference should be paid to public opinion. How malice and scandal would wing their bitter shafts when it became known that her Majesty had quitted the world without calling upon the services of her spiritual advisers! Accordingly Walpole approached the Princess Amelia, and suggested that Potter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, should be sent for. "It will be quite as well," said he, with the bad taste which often characterized him when he felt it his duty to give official support to religion or morality, "it will be quite as well that the farce should be played. The Archbishop of Canterbury would perform it decently; and the Princess might bid him to be as short as she liked. It would do the Queen neither harm nor good; and it would satisfy all the fools who called them Atheists, if they affected to be as great fools as they who called them so."

Thus graciously bidden, the Archbishop attended at the palace. What was the nature of the interview between the invalid and the divine we know not. It is, however, certain that the Archbishop did not administer the Sacrament to the Queen. With her Majesty at enmity with her first-born, he felt himself unable to perform so sacred a rite. Considerable curiosity was manifested by the courtiers on this occasion. It was wished that the mother should be reconciled to her son: if she accepted the last

consolations of the Church a reconciliation would take place; should she refuse, she would die still relentless against the Prince. Therefore, whenever the Archbishop appeared in the crowded antechamber, one question was on every lip: "Has the Queen received?" The answer of his Grace had more of the diplomacy of the courtier than the candour of the priest. To all he replied, "Her Majesty is in a most heavenly frame of mind." A mother persistently refusing to forgive her son and a heavenly frame of mind are inconsistencies somewhat difficult to reconcile.

"My absence in the country," writes Walpole to his brother Horace, on the subject of the Queen's illness,* "is the only reason you did not hear from me last post. The melancholy occasion of my now coming will have reached you before this; but though it is as dismal a story as ever was told, it will be some satisfaction to you to have a short detail of what has passed, and some little comfort to know the present situation of matters.

"The Queen was taken ill last Wednesday. By all her complaints, and the symptoms that were confessed at that time, it was explicitly declared and universally believed to be the gout in her stomach. Her illness was at once so violent that Broxholms was consulted, with Tessier. All the usual and known remedies were plentifully given, but without any effect; for her vomitings continued very frequent. . . . . The necessity of giving the strongest and hottest medicines made them think it necessary to bleed freely, which was done three times in the three first days, but all without any visible effect. The case was thought so desperate that Sir Hans Sloan and Dr. Hulse were, on

* "Walpole Papers," Nov. 15, 1737. Coxe.

Friday, sent for, who totally despaired. Necessity at last discovered and revealed a secret which had been totally concealed and unknown. The Queen had a rupture, which is now known not to have been a new accident. Surgeons were sent for, and Mr. Ranby was at first alone called in: he, upon first sight, insisted upon further assistance in his profession, upon which Bussieure and Skipton, a city surgeon, very eminent and able, were sent for. They found a great outward inflammation upon the rupture, and immediately let out that matter, but proceeded further, and made an incision into the cavity of the body near the rupture. . . . . All hopes given over, and a mortification judged most certain. . . . . Her present situation is this: She slept last night better than ever, has not vomited since two in the morning, has not the least fever, and her pulse so mended that they pronounce it now a good pulse. . . . . In this fatal crisis nothing can be said, but we must truly lament what we scarce dare to think of. But will it ever be believed, that a life of this importance (when there is no room for flattery) should be lost, or run thus near, by concealing human infirmities?

'Incurata pudor malus ulcera cerat.'

"I must have done; our distraction and grief wants no relation. I am oppressed with sorrow and dread."

His worst fears were soon realised. On Sunday morning, the 20th of November, the Queen was taken with great pain. "How long can this last?" she asked of the physician in attendance. "It will not be long," replied he, "before your Majesty will be relieved from this suffering." "The sooner the better," answered Caroline. Before mid-day she had passed away. A strong masculine mind, of

great independence of character, singularly free from the prejudices of her sex, shrewd, hard, well read, the wife of our second George takes rank among the ablest, most lax, most commanding of all the Queens-Consort of England.*

* Coxe. Lord Hervey. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1737. Doran's "Queens of Hanover."

CHAPTER X.

THE RIGHT OF SEARCH. 1738—1739.

On the death of Caroline the faction led by the Prince of Wales were in high spirits. It was known that the Queen had been the constant upholder of the policy of Walpole, and it was confidently expected, now his powerful patron was no more, that the downfall of the minister was at hand. "In case the Queen dies," writes Chesterfield, a few days before that event had taken place,* "I think Walpole should be looked upon as gone too, whether he be really so or no, which will be the most likely way to weaken him; for if he be supposed to inherit the Queen's power over the King, it will in some degree give it him; and if the Opposition are wise, instead of treating with him, they should attack him most vigorously and personally as a person who has lost his chief support. Which is indeed true: for though he may have more power with the King than any other body, yet he will never have that kind of power which he had by her means; and he will not even dare to mention many things to the King which he could, without difficulty, have brought about by her means." In a second letter Chesterfield again refers to the subject; "It is most certain that Sir Robert must be

* "Lord Chesterfield's Life and Letters." Ed. Lord Mahon, quoted from Dr. Doran.

in the utmost distress, and can never hope to govern the King as the Queen governed him. . . . . We have a prospect of the Claude Lorraine kind before us, while Sir Robert's has all the horrors of Salvator Rosa. If the Prince would play the rising sun, he would gild it finely; if not, he will be under a cloud, which he will never be able hereafter to shine through."

Frequent, therefore, were the meetings at Norfolk House, among the leaders of the Opposition—Pulteney, Carteret, Chesterfield, and Wyndham—to arrange their plan of warfare for the campaign of the next session. After much deliberation, it was resolved that Walpole was to be thwarted in every measure he introduced; his past policy was to be nightly attacked; the King was to be poisoned against him by those in the confidence of the Court; the divisions in the Cabinet, which intrigue and ambition had been busy in creating, were to be widened and encouraged by promises of support in the future; principles, patriotism, the honour of English gentlemen, were all to be sacrificed, if necessary, provided by such means the hated Prime Minister could be overthrown. Such was the programme of the Opposition on the eve of the parliamentary session of 1738.

But Walpole, well aware of the shock his position had received from the death of the Queen, was likewise busy in his efforts to strengthen himself against the approaching conflict. His keen, cynical, unscrupulous intellect soon grasped the nature of the political situation, and decided upon the course to follow. Though parliamentary government was rapidly developing in power and independence, yet the influence of the Crown still in no slight measure controlled the freedom of the Estates of the Realm. The authority of the State in those days, when judiciously

employed, was not wielded, as it is now wielded, by the Legislature, but by the Monarchy. The influence of the Upper House and the rising power of the House of Commons were still overshadowed by the majesty of the sovereign. The King yet ruled as well as reigned, and he who governed the King governed England.

It had been the great aim of Walpole to ingratiate himself with the Crown, and thus secure the dominating power of the King on his side. Up to the present moment he had succeeded, for he had advised Caroline, and Caroline had advised her husband. When certain courtiers, under the impression that Lady Suffolk exercised a stronger hold over the King than the Queen, paid their homage to the mistress instead of to the wife, in the hopes of gaining their sovereign, Walpole was astute enough not to fall into the mistake. He saw that the King, in spite of his infidelities, loved, as he said, the little finger of his wife better than the whole body of Lady Suffolk, and it was to Caroline, and not to the mistress, that the minister tendered his faithful services. With what result we have seen—intellectually the Queen was absolute with her husband, the mistress was ignored. But now circumstances would oblige him to alter his tactics.

Of all the abandoned creatures who surrounded the King, Sophia de Walmoden, then residing in Hanover, was the especial favourite. It was to enjoy the society of this lady that his Majesty paid his frequent visits to Herrenhausen; and it was the delight of the monarch, on his return, to dilate to Caroline, with that delicacy which was so conspicuous in his nature, upon the charms of his mistress, and to enliven the monotony of domestic conversation by reading aloud to the wife the letters of the courtesan.

This was the dame whom Walpole had the shameless and unmanly audacity to advise the Queen, if she wished to continue her empire over her husband, to lower herself to recognise. From the continual visits of the King to Hanover, and from the thraldom in which he was enslaved by the Rubens-like charms of Madame de Walmoden, Caroline was, for the first time in her life, really anxious about her husband and herself. Never had George remained so long away from her at one time; never had he been so bewitched by any of his venal seraglio; never had he been, when absent, so curt and harsh in his correspondence with her. After all her devotion, and all her culpable lenience, was she at last to lose her authority over her husband?

Nor was Walpole less anxious. Should the King be so completely fascinated by the Walmoden as to be indifferent to the Queen, the indirect power of the minister over the policy of the Court could no longer be exercised. In the downfall of Caroline was involved the downfall of Walpole. And now ensued as singular a conversation as ever took place between sovereign and subject, and perhaps between wife and friend. Walpole, with that bluntness which was often his form of diplomacy, informed the Queen that she was getting on in years, that the little beauty she had once possessed had vanished, and that to a man endowed with the temperament of her husband she could no longer be personally attractive. He bade her sacrifice the dictates of her heart, if she wished to maintain her intellectual authority over the King. Let her write submissive, affectionate letters to her husband, let her be dead to all jealousy, and let her recommend the King not to be constantly absent at Hanover, but to bring the object of his fascination over with him to England. With that hard unsexed-like fortitude

which is so unpleasant an element in the character of Caroline, the Queen consented to this degrading arrangement. Nay, the infamous advice of her minister even met with her praise, and she laughed at Walpole for doubting that she would carry it out. Fortunately circumstances prevented its adoption at the time.

On the death of the Queen, Walpole advised that Madame de Walmoden should be invited to take up her abode in England. It was his intention now to substitute the German beauty for Caroline, and to govern the lover through the mistress, as he had before governed the husband through the wife. Accordingly Sophia de Walmoden soon made her appearance in London, was handsomely lodged in Kensington Palace, and shortly after her arrival was created Countess of Yarmouth—the last instance in our history of the mistress of a sovereign being raised to the peerage. Thus matters stood at the opening of the session of 1738: the Opposition united, hostile, and resolved to crush the minister who had neglected their services and defeated their schemes; the minister, the warm friend of Lady Yarmouth, and still the trusted and confidential adviser of the Crown.

No sooner had the Houses assembled than Shippen led off the attack. In the eyes of the Opposition the great fault of the Walpole administration had always been its pacific policy. To maintain peace, to keep trade buoyant, to diminish taxation, had been the one aim of the minister, and, provided that end could be attained, it was said that he was ever ready to sacrifice the prestige of England as a great power, and to lower her in the reputation of Europe. This was the grievous charge which Pulteney, Bolingbroke, and Chesterfield had, either in Parliament or through the

press, been in the habit, session after session, of hurling against Walpole. He was afraid of France, he was afraid of Spain, he was afraid of Austria, of Sweden, of Russia, of the whole Continent. What the heel was to Achilles the commerce of England was to Walpole; it was his one vulnerable point,—wound him there, and he was ready to submit to any terms rather than place it in jeopardy.

Yet hate had rendered the Opposition so inconsistent that the moment Walpole faced his parliamentary foes he was attacked for keeping up a stronger military force than was required. If the Opposition were so anxious to uphold the prestige of England, why seek to reduce her troops instead of voting to increase them? But it was an opportunity to harass Walpole, and such, according to their programme, was all that was desired. The military estimates having come before the House, Shippen moved that the army be reduced from 17,400 men to 12,000. He said that a standing army was obnoxious to the principles of the Constitution, contrary to the spirit of the Revolution, and only maintained to support corruption and arbitrary power. Then, anxious to asperse the present conduct of the Whigs, he stated that the liberties of Englishmen had been better secured before the usurpation of the House of Orange than after that event, that it was not till the ninth year of King William that a standing army had been officially established, that the Tories had ever opposed such an institution, and that those Whigs who would refuse him their support on this occasion would desert the principles of their ancestors and the true creed of their party.

The answer of Walpole was among the happiest of his parliamentary efforts. He declined to admit that those who opposed the motion would be guilty of deserting Whig

principles. Between troops composed entirely of English subjects, officered by men of birth and fortune, and dependent for their existence upon the annual consent of Parliament, and foreign mercenaries, drawn from the dregs of the people and commanded by adventurers, as had been the troops in the days of the Stuarts, the distinction was so great as to nullify all the conclusions arrived at by the speaker. A standing army as it now existed preserved the Constitution against faction or disaffection, and protected the people from domestic broils and foreign invasion. Then, regarding the Tories as the allies of the Jacobites, he cleverly argued that all who would support Shippen, whose views in favour of the Stuarts were well known, must be friends of the Pretender, and the foes of the present Government.

"Suppose, Sir," he said, "we have at present nothing to fear from any foreign enemy, yet it cannot be said we are in absolute security, or that we have nothing to fear. There is one thing I am afraid of, and it is, indeed, the only thing, I think, we have at present to fear. The fear I mean is that of the Pretender; every one knows there is still a pretender to his Majesty's crown and dignity; there is still a person who pretends to be lawful and rightful sovereign of these kingdoms, and, what makes the misfortune more considerable, there are still a great number of persons in these kingdoms so much deluded by his abettors as to think the same way. These are the only persons who can properly be called disaffected, and they are still so numerous that, though this government had not a foreign enemy under the sun, the danger we are in from the Pretender and the disaffected part of our own subjects is a danger which every true Briton ought to fear, a danger which every man who has a due regard for our present

happy establishment will certainly endeavour to provide against as much as he can.

"I am sorry to see, Sir, that this is a sort of fear which a great many amongst us endeavour to turn into ridicule; and for that purpose they tell us that, though there are many of our subjects discontented and uneasy, there are but very few disaffected. I must beg leave to be of a different opinion, for I believe most of the discontents and uneasinesses that appear among the people proceed originally from disaffection. No man of common prudence will profess himself openly a Jacobite; by so doing he not only may injure his private fortune, but he must render himself less able to do any effectual service to the cause he has embraced, therefore there are but very few such men in the kingdom. Your right Jacobite, Sir, disguises his true sentiments; he roars out for revolution principles; he pretends to be a great friend to liberty, and a great admirer of our ancient Constitution; and, under this pretence, there are numbers who every day endeavour to sow discontents among the people, by persuading them that the Constitution is in danger, and that they are unnecessarily loaded with many and heavy taxes. These men know that discontent and disaffection are like wit and madness—they are separated by thin partitions; and therefore they hope, if they can once render the people thoroughly discontented, it will be easy for them to render them disaffected. These are the men we have most reason to be afraid of. They are, I am afraid, more numerous than most gentlemen imagine, and I wish I could not say they have been lately joined, and very much assisted, by some gentlemen who, I am convinced, have always been, and still are, very sincere and true friends to our present happy establishment.

"By the accession of these new allies, as I may justly call them, the real but concealed Jacobites have succeeded even beyond their own expectations; and therefore I am not at all ashamed to say I am in fear of the Pretender. It is a danger I shall never be ashamed to say I am afraid of, because it is a danger we must always be more or less exposed to; and I believe the less number of regular forces we keep up, the more we shall always be exposed to this danger."

So conclusive was Walpole's reply, and so skilfully had he turned the tables upon his adversaries, that the "Patriots" dared not challenge a division. Thus the debate would have concluded, and another triumph have been added to the victories of the minister, had it not been for the foolish conduct of certain of his partisans. A few Whigs, irritated at the charge made by Shippen, that in maintaining a standing army they were acting in defiance of the firm principles of their party, renewed the debate on a subsequent occasion. One Colonel Mordaunt, whilst the House was considering the estimate of a certain regiment to be sent to Georgia, rose up, and in the place of the distinction carefully laid down by Walpole between those who upheld the Protestant Succession and those who supported the Pretender, introduced the far narrower and more hazardous difference of Whig and Tory. "I have always gloried in being thought a Whig," said the Colonel. "I hope I shall never by my behaviour, either in this House or without-doors, give the least occasion to the world to think otherwise of me; and for this very reason I am for keeping up an army, because I *think the keeping up an army absolutely necessary for supporting the Whig interest*, and preserving the peace and quiet of the people. In every dispute that

has happened of late years about our army I have looked upon the question to be, chiefly, *whether Whig or Tory should prevail?* And as I always thought, as I believe every unprejudiced Whig in the kingdom thinks, *that if the army should be disbanded, or very much reduced, the Tory interest would prevail;* therefore I have generally been against such reductions, and always shall be cautious of agreeing to any such proposition. Nay, I am so firmly attached to the Whig interest that, if I should think four times the number of troops absolutely necessary for supporting that interest, I would be for keeping up a standing army four times as numerous as that we have now on foot."

This indiscreet speech was too favourable to the Opposition not to be at once seized upon. Lord Polwarth, next to Wyndham the ablest speaker of his party, immediately rose, and in an eloquent speech inveighed against the tenor of Mordaunt's observations. He showed that the question did not turn upon the distinction between Whigs and Tories, but upon their present behaviour and political conduct: he insinuated that the Ministerial party, which affected to distinguish itself by the appellation of Whigs, acted contrary to the principles of that party, and were in reality Tories; and that those who were invidiously styled Tories were in reality Whigs. Then, after this preface, he added, "I am apt to suspect that my honourable friend calls this the Whig interest, and if so, I shall readily agree with him, that what he calls the Whig interest, being what I call the Tory interest, cannot be supported without a standing army. This may be a prevailing argument with him for being against any reduction, but it is an argument that has quite a different influence with me; for I think no interest, nor any party of men, ought to be supported,

if a standing army becomes necessary for their support." The result of the indiscretion of Colonel Mordaunt was to divide the House, when, instead of the crushing triumph that would otherwise have been obtained, the Opposition succeeded in gaining 164 votes against the 249 of the Government.

But this debate and the one that ensued upon the infringement of parliamentary privilege from the publication of speeches made in the House were only preliminary to the great question of the session—a question which the members of the Opposition, during the recess, had busied themselves in discussing throughout the country with all the zeal and prejudice of party tactics. Into this subject we must briefly enter. Within the last few years disputes had constantly arisen between Spain and Great Britain respecting the interpretation to be put upon the two treaties which then regulated the commercial transactions of the two countries. In 1667 a treaty had been concluded between Spain and Great Britain, in which Spain fully recognised the British possessions in America, and the right of Great Britain to traffic with her settlements. By a clause in this treaty merchant vessels sailing near the ports and in the seas belonging to the respective countries were liable to be searched, and to have all goods of a contraband nature on board seized and confiscated. Three years afterwards this treaty was confirmed and extended, and several new articles introduced relating to trade in the West Indies and the right of English ships to put into Spanish ports when driven thither by stress of weather or furnished with a special permission.

In order to carry out the provisions of these treaties, Spain had established a small fleet of Guarda Costas, or

guard-ships, to overhaul all British vessels sailing in her waters and to inspect their cargoes. Hence, from the very nature of these permissions and restrictions, disputes could not but inevitably break out. British ships objected to the exercise of the "Right of Search," as it was called; Spanish officials objected to the exercise of smuggling. To escape the Spanish regulations was therefore the object of every English captain. All the resources of evasion were constantly put into practice. The South Sea Company was permitted to send once a year a ship laden with goods to the Spanish colonies. It was soon discovered that this ship was accompanied by other vessels which, whilst anchored at a distance, kept supplying the South Sea barque with fresh goods; so that the South Sea Company, though keeping within the letter of the law by sending only one ship, yet managed to pour into that one ship the cargoes of several. Again, English ships were in the habit of putting into Spanish harbours under the pretence of victualling and refitting, but in reality for selling British wares; whilst English merchantmen hovered around the Spanish coast dealing largely with smugglers, who stole out to sea in their long boats and obtained valuable cargoes duty free. By these secret and dishonest means much of British merchandise was transported into the Spanish colonies, to the great detriment of the revenue of Spain, and to the business of the honest Spanish trader.

It was natural that the Spanish Government should do all in its power to suppress this organized system of fraud around its coasts, and deal out severe punishment to the culprit when apprehended. Nor was it unnatural, considering the provocation given by British captains, that the Spaniards, in their keenness for revenge and their zeal for

reprisals, should occasionally have exercised their right of search in waters where they had no jurisdiction; should have made the innocent suffer for the guilty by seizing goods that were not strictly contraband; should have harshly punished several of the sailors who fell into their hands; and should have taken various merchantmen in tow as prizes. Dishonesty is seldom one-sided in its operations; those who live by fraud must expect in their turn to be defrauded. But the British sailor objected to this system of retaliation. He had no scruples about adding to his own capital by robbing the revenue of Spain; it was all fair that he should replenish the South Sea Company's ship by goods from his vessel, or permit the smugglers in the dead of night to transport his cargo to their long boats; but it was monstrous that his own ship should be inspected, that he should be put in irons, that his merchantman should be seized upon as a prize! As well might the guerilla soldier who shoots down his neighbour object to himself being shot.

As is always the case when disputes arise, both parties declared themselves to be innocent, and laid the whole blame upon the other. By careful suppressions of the truth, by ingenious perversions, and by distorted statements, the captain of a Guarda Costa made it appear that he had never exceeded his duty, had never overhauled vessels in foreign waters, and had never ill-treated prisoners; and by employing the same cunning measures the captain of the British merchantman vindicated himself from most of the charges that were laid at his door. There can be no doubt that grave faults were committed on both sides. The Guarda Costas had frequently been guilty of inflicting severe punishments upon the sailors they apprehended, of

exercising their right of search where they were not empowered, and of plundering; but, at the same time, the captain of the English merchantman had in his turn openly perpetrated gross and grievous frauds upon the commerce of Spain, had materially crippled her revenue, and had raised smuggling to the position of a maritime industry. Thus both nations possessed grievances which the mischievous or the partisan could readily seize upon and divert to his own purpose. Spain was loud in her denunciations against the nefarious practices of British vessels in her waters, and stanchly upheld the conduct of her Guarda Costas. In England equally loud were the complaints against the right of search by Spain, against the inhuman treatment of English prisoners immured in Spanish dungeons, and against the harsh restrictions put upon trade with America. These murmurs were all the more inflamed by quarrels respecting the right of cutting logwood in Campeachy Bay, and the boundaries of the new settlement established by England in North America, and named in honour of her King Georgia.

The question came before Parliament. The Opposition, enchanted at finding so excellent an occasion of worrying Walpole, warmly sided with all who arraigned the conduct of Spain. "Our countrymen in chains! and slaves to Spaniards!" was the party cry of those whom Pulteney and Wyndham led. Petitions were presented to the House inveighing against the seizures and depredations of the Spaniards, and praying for redress. A warm debate ensued. The note struck by the Opposition was for vengeance. "Our countrymen in chains! and slaves to Spaniards!" cried Alderman Willmot, a devoted follower of Wyndham. "Is not this enough to fire the coldest?

Is not this enough to rouse all the vengeance of national resentment? And shall we sit here debating about words and forms, while the sufferings of our countrymen call loudly for redress?"

The reply of Walpole was that of a statesman. He admitted that the Spanish Guarda Costas had been guilty of many outrages upon British subjects, but he hoped that they still might be atoned for by a full and friendly compensation. He assured the House that the Government would at once put itself into communication with the Court at Madrid, and demand redress. He begged that members of the Opposition would keep a guard over their words, and not inflame the country by denunciations against the right of search which Spain had so long exercised, and which she now could scarcely be expected to abandon, or by other hasty proceedings render the preservation of peace a matter of great difficulty. He was as jealous of the honour of his country as any Englishman, but it was his opinion that recourse should not be had to arms whilst a prospect remained of obtaining their ends by the suggestions and remonstrances of diplomacy.

"It is, without doubt," he said, "a very popular way of arguing, to talk highly of the honour, the courage, and the superior power of this nation; and, I believe, I have as good an opinion of the honour, courage, and power of this nation as any man can, or ought to, have; but other nations must be supposed to have honour as well as we, and all nations generally have a great opinion of their courage and power. If we should come to an open rupture with Spain, we might in all probability have the advantage; but victory and success do not always attend upon that side which seems to be the most powerful. Therefore an open rupture, or

declared war, between two potent nations must always be allowed to be an affair of the utmost importance to both; and as this may be the consequence of our present deliberations, we ought to proceed with great coolness and with the utmost caution."

Then, dealing with an accusation hurled against him by Wyndham that his advocacy of peace was entirely due to selfish and interested motives—not peace for the good of the country, but peace for the stability of his own administration—he argued that war, instead of being unfavourable to a Cabinet alleged to be culpable and incapable, would, on the contrary, be beneficial. "I have always," he said,* "disregarded a popularity that was not acquired by a hearty zeal for the public interest; and I have been long enough in this House to see that the most steady opposers of popularity, founded upon any other views have lived to receive the thanks of their country for that opposition. For my part, I never could see any cause, either from reason or my own experience, to imagine that a minister is not as safe in time of war as in time of peace. Nay, if we are to judge by reason alone, it is the interest of a minister, conscious of any mismanagement, that there *should* be a war, because by a war the eyes of the public are diverted from examining into his conduct; nor is he accountable for the bad success of a war, as he is for that of an administration." This judicious and temperate speech met with the approval of the House, and was the means of rejecting an indiscreet motion proposed by Pulteney, that the correspondence on the subject between the Government and the Court of Madrid be laid upon the table.

Yet the feeling of the country was in favour of aggres-

* "Parl. Hist.," vol. x., May 12, 1738.

sive measures. A distinguished modern statesman has said that the English are the most enthusiastic of all nations when once their sympathies are excited; at such a moment admonition, the conclusions of logic, consistency, even justice itself, are disregarded in the pursuit of a cause, however mischievous or intemperate, which strikes home to the heart of the people. The conduct of Spain had aroused one of these dangerous ebullitions of national feeling. With that perverse one-sidedness which is the very soul of prejudice, men declined to examine into the wrongs of Spain—her commerce crippled, her revenue diminished, an organized system of smuggling environing her coasts—it was only the injury done by Spain to England, and not the injury done by England to Spain, that created indignation and excited sympathy. A committee had been appointed by the House of Commons to inquire into the grievances complained of by British merchants. Sailors, traders, spies, pirates flocked down to Westminster to tell their tale, and add to the already well-circulated list of Spanish atrocities. English sailors captured by the Spaniards had been ironed, had been mutilated, had been forced to work in the dockyards or in the fortifications, had been deprived of nourishment, had been confined in loathsome dungeons, had been left to perish amid the stench and vermin of neglect and overcrowding. Such were the stories told by witnesses at the bar of the House of Commons, and re-echoed in the pamphlets and lampoons that flooded the country.

The name of one individual—the Titus Oates of the occasion—has been preserved by history on account of his tale of suffering, patriotism, and resignation. Some years before a man called Jenkins, the captain of a trading vessel,

had been boarded in the Spanish seas by a Guarda Costa, and both he and his crew subjected to much indignity. According to his statement, his men were put to torture, he himself was strung up three times to the yard-arm, then, more dead than alive, he was hauled down, one of his ears was cut off, and he was ordered to return to England and show it to the King. His story had made no sensation when he repeated it on his arrival, but now the Opposition felt the full value of being able to lay hands on such a witness. Jenkins was summoned to the bar of the House and examined. He told his sad tale, he displayed his severed ear, which he carried about with him wrapped in cotton, and he repeated the statement of the Spanish captain, that if the King of England had been present on the occasion his Majesty would have undergone the same punishment. The audience listened to him with suppressed fury and indignation, as in former times they had listened to Titus Oates; then it was the Papists that roused the hostile sympathies of the English, now it was the Spaniards.

Full of an admiring pity for the mutilated seaman, a member innocently asked Jenkins what were his thoughts when he found himself in the power of such a barbarian. "I recommended my soul to God," answered the hero, "and my cause to my country." It was just the theatrical reply for the occasion. The story of Jenkins passed through the country like wildfire; it was printed with suitable exaggerations; it was turned into a ballad—not a villager but heard of it in the taproom, not a town idler but listened to it sung at the corner of the streets. Pope has immortalised the event in verse:

> "The Spaniards own they did a waggish thing,
> Who cropt our ears and sent them to the King."

"We have no need of allies to enable us to command justice," cried Pulteney; "the story of Jenkins will raise volunteers." Contemporary gossip, however, hints that Jenkins lost one of his ears in the pillory, and not by the knife of a Guarda Costa captain. Burke labels the whole story as "The Fable of Jenkins' Ears."

Nor had Walpole only to contend with the excitement raging throughout the country. He was beset on all sides by difficulties. The Spanish envoy, Thomas Fitzgerald, otherwise known as Don Thomas Geraldino, detested the Prime Minister, and was hand in glove with the leaders of the Opposition. Not a dispatch passed between Whitehall and Madrid but was revealed to Pulteney or to Wyndham. The envoy assured everybody he met that the negotiations carried on by the English Cabinet were worthless—that Spain would decline all terms, and that nothing would induce her to withdraw from her colonial rights and privileges. Indeed, so unbecoming was the conduct of Geraldino that a formal remonstrance was made against it by Walpole to the Court of Madrid. The envoy, however, when called upon to vindicate himself by the Spanish Government, replied that the views of Walpole, though apparently pacific, were yet inconsistent with the security of the Spanish trade and every maxim of the Spanish monarchy, and that Spain could not be better served than by encouraging the discontents and divisions in England. His answer was considered satisfactory at Madrid, and the envoy was continued in his post.

Unhappily, Geraldino found ample opportunities for the employment of his malicious diplomacy. Divisions had sprung up afresh in the Cabinet. The Duke of Newcastle—the meanest, falsest, and most traitorous minister that ever

held the seals—saw his opportunity to outbid his colleague. It was his custom to desert and deceive his friends. When Stanhope had been in power Newcastle was his colleague stanch and true, but the moment the star of Walpole was in the ascendant his Grace, with charming impartiality, left Stanhope, and threw in his fortunes with those of Walpole. "His name is perfidy," said Sir Robert. "He is a very great liar," pithily exclaimed Chesterfield. "He has not brains enough to be chamberlain in a little German Court," said George the Second. Still Newcastle, feeble and incompetent as he was, knew the value of his rank, his wealth, and the votes at his command in the Lower House. Though utterly unfit for office, with no capacity for business, a wretched speaker, and endowed with an intellect that confused every subject it attempted to grasp, he loved power as selfishly and as tenaciously as did Walpole. He saw that the policy of Walpole was not approved of by the country. He knew that the King was in favour of war. He was on good terms with several of the Opposition. Why should he not intrigue to oust Walpole from power, and seize himself the reins of government? He put his sly designs into execution. He became the mouthpiece of the Cabinet. He flattered the military spirit of the King. He agreed with the views of Pulteney and Wyndham. He wrote angry instructions to the English minister in Spain, which it required all the tact of Walpole to alter and modify. He was a continual thorn in the side of his chief, yet Walpole at the present crisis dared not dismiss Newcastle, as he had dismissed Carteret, and Townshend, and Chesterfield.

Still to Walpole the course he should pursue was perfectly clear. Though he was hampered by a divided

Cabinet, by a keenly hostile Opposition, by the views of a lukewarm sovereign, and by an embarrassing agitation throughout the country, he would throw all the weight of his influence into the scale of peace. He was assured in his own mind that to make war upon Spain was a false and suicidal policy. None of the grievances complained of justified a resort to arms for their redress. In the dispute between the two countries the tact and temper of the diplomatist were required, not the blood and iron of the soldier. He hoped that England would be moderate in her demands, mindful of the provocation she had given, and that Spain, remembering the outrage she had committed, would accede to what was desired. At all events, he would first endeavour to attain his ends by pacific means. Still, should England be resolved upon war and decline to be satisfied with nought else than a raid upon the Spaniard, his Grace of Newcastle might find that there was one in the Cabinet besides himself perfectly ready to preserve power by an acquiescence in a nation's wish. Walpole felt sure that a pacific policy was the one course that should be adopted on this occasion for the interests of England, but if the question was ultimately to be reduced to a choice between declaring war and his remaining at the head of affairs, or between advocating peace and his resignation of the seals of office, unhesitatingly he would prefer power to peace. He had sacrificed the Excise Bill, though he knew it to be a wise and sound measure, to the selfish ends of office, and, if necessary, he was prepared to repeat his conduct upon this question of the Spanish depredations.

To enter into the correspondence that passed between Whitehall and Madrid, and the resolutions and amendments moved in both Houses of Parliament concerning the

aggressions of Spain, are foreign to my purpose. Suffice it to say that, after much debate and frequent dispatches to Benjamin Keene, the English ambassador at Madrid, a Convention was concluded between the two countries. It was agreed that Spain, as a compensation for the damages sustained to English commerce by the conduct of her Guarda Costas, should pay England, after certain deductions due from England to Spain, the sum of £95,000; that plenipotentiaries from both countries should meet shortly at Madrid to regulate the pretensions of the two kingdoms as to the rights of trade and the limits of Carolina and Florida; that eight months should be allowed the plenipotentiaries to complete their proceedings, and that during that interval no progress should be made in the fortifications of either province. On the Convention being signed at Madrid it was forwarded to London and laid before Parliament.

No sooner were its clauses examined than the most bitter criticisms were showered upon it by the Opposition. The indignation of the country had been directed against the claim of Spain to overhaul British ships, but in the Convention the question—the burning question of the hour—of Right of Search had been carefully avoided. It had been desired that the boundaries of Georgia should be clearly defined, and that the disputes with regard to the right of cutting logwood in Campeachy Bay should be settled; yet in the Convention there was not one word about the limits of Georgia or the timber in the Bay. The public had demanded that the Spanish captains guilty of cruelty to English seamen should be severely punished, yet the Convention was silent upon the subject.

In both Houses member after member rose up to denounce the measure. In the Lords it was bitterly

attacked by the Duke of Argyle, who had deserted from the Ministerial ranks, and by Chesterfield and Carteret. The chief speakers against it in the Commons were the more prominent leaders of the Opposition, but it is admitted that on this occasion the laurels of debate were won by Pitt—the future mighty Chatham—then rapidly rising in the estimation of the House. "Is this," he exclaimed, "any longer a nation, or what is an English Parliament, if, with more ships in your harbours than in all the navies of Europe, with above two millions of people in your American colonies, you will bear to hear of the expediency of receiving from Spain an insecure, unsatisfactory, and dishonourable Convention? . . . . I think from my soul this Convention is nothing but a stipulation for national ignominy; an illusory expedient to baffle the resentment of the nation; a truce without a suspension of hostilities on the part of Spain; on the part of England a suspension as to Georgia of the first law of nature, self-preservation and self-defence; a surrender of the rights and trade of England to the mercy of plenipotentiaries; and in this infinitely highest and sacred point, future security, not only inadequate but directly repugnant to the resolutions of Parliament and the gracious promise of the Throne. The complaints of your despairing merchants —the voice of England—has condemned it. Be the guilt of it upon the head of the adviser; God forbid that this committee should share the guilt by approving it!"

At a late hour Walpole replied upon the whole debate. He was aware that the Convention was not a definitive treaty, but in his opinion it laid the foundation for one. Severe strictures had been passed upon his love for peace, and he was proud to feel that through his efforts he had,

he hoped, prevented war breaking out against a nation with whom it was our greatest interest to be at peace, especially at a time like the present, when the doubtful situation of Europe left us little hopes of assistance, whilst giving us well-founded fears of being attacked by other powers. After the concessions already made by the Court at Madrid he would consider a declaration of war against Spain as unjust, impolitic, and dishonourable.

"Admitting, however," he said, "that the Convention has not effectually answered the expectations of the House, should it not be considered whether the declaration of war would benefit trade, what prospect of success could be reasonably entertained, and particularly whether even a successful war with Spain might not involve us in a very doubtful and expensive war with other powers? These considerations seem never once to have occupied the thoughts of those who are adverse to the question. It is laid down as a maxim that we ought immediately to enter into a war, and yet nothing is allowed for the uncertainty of the event, for the interruption of commerce, and the prodigious expense with which it would be attended. But should we even lay aside these considerations, are we to have no regard to common justice, to those treaties the observance of which has been so justly contended for? These treaties prohibit all trade with the Spanish West Indies, excepting that carried on by the annual *assiento* ship. In contradiction, then, to these express stipulations, are our ships never to be searched, and is the trade to the Spanish West Indies open to every interloper? For what difference is there between throwing that trade open, and having a liberty not only of approaching their coasts, but even of hovering on them as long as we please, without being

stopped or searched? These are the unjust concessions which the advocates of a war require. The Convention, on the contrary, stipulates that the treaties subsisting between the two Crowns should be the rule for settling disputes relating to trade. We are therefore in no danger of suffering from the Convention, because it is admitted that all we ought in reason to claim is the observance of those treaties."

His defence was, however, coldly received by the House, and approved of by a narrow majority of only 28, a strange contrast to the troops of adherents who usually followed him into the lobby!

On the following day the subject was again renewed, and again when the House was divided the same scanty following endorsed the policy of the First Minister. The Opposition now entered into a plot against the Government. Since Walpole was rapidly losing his influence in the House of Commons, and his popularity with the country, they would do all in their power to embarrass his movements and blacken his reputation. Save a few distinguished exceptions the members of the Opposition to a man agreed to withdraw themselves from the Chamber —they would have no part in passing this odious Convention; they would leave the minister alone with his brazen and venal following, and they would show the nation that by their disapproval of corruption and pusillanimity they were worthy of the proud name of Patriots.

The scheme had been recommended by Bolingbroke, and Wyndham, with all his dignity of manner and charm of voice, at once proceeded to put it into execution. Amid the deepest silence he rose to bid a final adieu to the House. He had been in hopes that the unanswerable

arguments urged in the debate against the Convention would have prevailed upon gentlemen to have for once listened to the dictates of reason, and for once to have distinguished themselves from being a faction against the liberties and properties of their fellow-subjects. He had been the more in hopes of this since all to whom he had spoken had condemned this Convention. Was it not strange that the eloquence of one man should have so great an effect within the walls of this House, and the unanimous voice of a brave suffering people out of doors should have so little? He was surprised at being unable to discern one argument that had the least appearance of reason in the numerous speeches on the side of the Government to which he had listened.

"This must proceed," he said, "either from the majority of this House being determined by arguments that we have not heard, or from my wanting common sense to comprehend the force of those we have heard. In the first case I think I cannot with honour sit in an assembly which is determined by motives which I am not at liberty to mention, and if the last is the case I look upon myself as a very unfit person to serve as a senator. I here, Sir, bid a final adieu to this House. Perhaps when another Parliament shall succeed I may be again at liberty to serve my country in the same capacity. I therefore appeal, Sir, to a future free uninfluenced House of Commons. Let it be the judge of my conduct and that of my friends on this occasion. Meantime I shall conclude with doing that duty to my country I am still at liberty to perform, which is to pray for its preservation. May, therefore, that Power which has so often and so visibly interposed in behalf of the rights and liberties of this nation continue its care

over us at this worst and most dangerous juncture—whilst the insolence of enemies without, and the influence of corruption within, threaten the ruin of her Constitution!"

These intemperate words stirred up fierce indignation in the ranks of the Ministerialists. To stigmatize the majority of the House as a *faction*, and to assert that its policy was maintained by corruption, were accusations not lightly to be dismissed. Pelham and several of the Cabinet urged that Wyndham should be sent to the Tower; but Walpole, with his usual *finesse*, knew that to make a martyr of the man was precisely the object he desired, and the simplest means of rendering the Opposition popular with the country, declined to fall into the snare, and refused the demands of his angry colleagues. The manner in which he met the charges of his opponent was very happy. "Sir," he said, with a fire and dignity not usual to him, "the measures which the gentleman who spoke last and his friends may pursue give me no uneasiness. The friends of the nation and the House are obliged to them for pulling off the mask, by making this public declaration. We can be upon our guard against open rebellion, but it is difficult to guard against secret traitors. The faction I speak of never sat in this House, they never joined in any public measure of the Government but with a view to distress it, and serve a Popish interest. The gentleman who is now the mouth of this faction was looked upon as the head of those traitors who, twenty-five years ago, conspired the destruction of their country, and of the Royal Family, to set a Popish pretender upon the throne. He was seized by the vigilance of Government, and pardoned by its clemency; but all the use he ungratefully made of that clemency has been to qualify himself accord-

ing to *law*, that he and his party may, some time or other, have an opportunity to overthrow all *law*.

"I am only afraid that they will not be so good as their word, and that they will return; for I remember that, in the case of their favourite prelate,* who was impeached of treason, the same gentleman and his faction made the same resolution. They then went off like traitors as they were; but their retreat had not the detestable effect they expected and wished, and therefore they returned. Ever since, Sir, they have persevered in the same treasonable intention of serving that interest, by distressing the Government. But I hope their behaviour will unite all true friends of the present happy establishment of the Crown in his Majesty's person and family more firmly than ever; and that the gentlemen who, with good intentions, have been deluded into the like measures will awaken from their delusion, since the trumpet of rebellion is now audaciously sounded." †

No counsel could be more ill-advised than that which recommended this secession. Had the Opposition wished to strengthen Walpole, and restore him to his accustomed favour with the nation, it could not have adopted a better course. An individual member of the House who disapproves of the policy of a Government can side with the Opposition, or if neither party pleases him he may remain neutral and independent until opportunity or conviction encourages him to declare his views. But an Opposition is not an individual; it is the representative of a great party bound to criticize the acts of the Government, to frustrate injudicious proceedings, and to check the unconstitutional exercise of power. For an Opposition to withdraw its

* Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester.

† *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1739.

entire strength from the House of Commons in the hour of emergency is as base and traitorous as the desertion of troops in the face of an enemy, because they dislike their commander-in-chief.

Wyndham, and those who acted with him, had solemnly declared that the Constitution was in danger; why then did they quit their posts and belie the trust reposed in them by their representatives? They had said that the majority in the House of Commons was a faction; and yet, in order to make that faction absolute, and to leave in its unfettered hands the entire administration of the affairs of the country, they had seceded! Was ever conduct more weak and illogical? They had charged the First Minister of the Crown with corruption; did they think bribes would be less freely given, and consciences become more strict, because those who might raise disagreeable inquiries as to the disposal of the Secret Service had retired from the House? Such were the comments passed upon this course of the Opposition throughout the country, and by very few was it vindicated or approved of. Indeed the conduct of those members—men like honest Sir John Barnard, Lord Polwarth, and Mr. Plumer of Hertfordshire—who had refused to become parties to this desertion, was unanimously applauded, and is the best proof of the light in which the tactics of Pulteney and Wyndham were regarded by friend as well as by foe.

Still to Bolingbroke the step he had recommended was wise, and he saw no reason to repent of his advice. "Of all the causes of your present public misfortunes," he writes to Wyndham,* "which are easy to be traced, a principal one is this: The Whigs have always looked on

* "Egremont Papers," July 23, 1739. Coxe.

the Protestant Succession, and the Tories on the Restoration of the Stuarts, as sure means to throw the whole power of the Government into the hands of one or the other of them, and to keep it there. I am confident the latter would have found themselves deceived; the former were encouraged and confirmed by the weak conduct of my Lord Oxford; by the characters of the late and present King, different indeed, but suited to their purpose; and by the absurd behaviour of the Tories, which no experience can cure. Thus party has become faction, distinguished no longer by principle, whatever may be represented, but by personal attachments. Had great men been at the head of the ruling faction your liberties had been lost without a chance to save them. Their characters would have imposed, and a successful administration might have hindered men from seeing the invasions made on liberty. Walpole's character could impose on no man. All the power and all the wealth of Britain has not been able to deck him out with a little dignity, nor to procure him common respect. A narrow capacity, good as far as it extends, but confined to the lowest and worst arts, to the tricks of domestic government, has rendered his administration one of the wickedest and weakest, the most hateful, and the most contemptible that our nation ever saw; and thus many chances to redeem yourselves from his tyranny, and to restore good government, have been created: the last, that which I hope still subsists, is the fairest that any infatuated minister could give against himself. His mal-administration appeared so flagrant that faction could not save him without avowing faction. You pulled off the mask; at least you showed mankind the turpitude of this proceeding, and you appealed to the nation; for your secession is such an appeal, or it is

the most pompous nothing I ever saw or heard of. To go back from this would be to admit what you have appealed against. For your own sakes, and for the sake of your country, you must go forward. You may do so by the strongest and most irreproachable measures; you may bring the dispute to fix on this single point, the personal interest of Walpole, in the eyes of the whole kingdom. If you persist, it must rest there at last, and there is not a man of spirit left in Britain, if it can rest there long."

To Walpole, however, the secession was a great cause of satisfaction. "No event in his administration," he said, "had ever relieved him from more embarrassment." Now it was in his power to be of service to the country, whereas before whatever measure he introduced was at once the signal for all the objections and the obloquy of the Opposition. Accordingly several bills were brought in and carried, conferring much benefit upon our home manufactures and colonial trade. The minister was also permitted to pass the Danish subsidy, by which England agreed to pay annually 150,000 dollars for three years in return for a promise of Denmark to hold ready 6,000 men for our service if needed. It was a grant always regarded in a hostile spirit by the Opposition, as the Danish troops, if required, would only be wanted to protect the small castle of Steinhorst, bought by the King from Holstein; consequently, whenever the question of subsidy was introduced, the usual charges of England being sacrificed to German interests were freely raised, and made the occasion of various *ad captandum* attacks upon Walpole. With the addition of this burden upon the estimates the session of 1739 closed.*

* Coxe. "Parliamentary History," vol. x. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1738-9. Stanhope's "History of England," vol. ii. 397—421.

During the recess Walpole exercised all his influence to settle the Spanish question on a pacific basis. He tried to convert the King to his views; he had interviews with several of the Opposition, and he combated strenuously with those in his own Cabinet who, like Newcastle and Hardwicke, were in favour of war. But now a new complication arose. Spain, conscious that justice was on her side, and that she was the aggrieved party, had been not a little angered at the charges made against her by the Opposition. The hot blood of her people had been roused by the fierce invectives of Pitt, of Pulteney, and of Wyndham. Mobs patrolled through the different Spanish towns clamouring for vengeance against those who had insulted their country by calling her people cowards, spies, and brutes. From Cadiz to St. Sebastian, from Madrid to Barcelona, angry murmurs broke out against the arrogance of England in presuming to dictate terms to a proud race whom her frauds and piracies had grossly injured.

What right, it was asked, had England to complain? If the Guarda Costas had occasionally exceeded their duty, had not British merchantmen been guilty of committing the grossest abuses upon Spanish commerce? Had English sailors not smuggled, landed additional cargoes to which they were not entitled, and in various ways defrauded the revenue? The secret of the hostility of England towards Spain was not Spanish cruelties, but that the people of the Peninsula would not allow British vessels to carry on a contraband trade. Had Parliament, which made such loud complaints against Spain, and imputed crimes to her which had never been proved, forgotten the just pretensions of Spain and the promises of his Britannic Majesty? Did the occupation of Gibraltar

and of Port Mahon, continued for so many years, give less grounds for complaint to Spain than the pretended losses of English merchants? Were the damages which British vessels had suffered greater than those caused by such usurpation? Could there ever be a solid and durable peace between England and Spain whilst Gibraltar and Port Mahon remained under British dominion? If the new colony of Georgia were allowed to subsist could Florida continue in safety? If England were anxious to be on good terms with Spain, let her yield as well as demand. Let her restore Gibraltar and Port Mahon, demolish Georgia and annul the Assiento treaty, then Spain in her turn might be disposed to yield to England a free navigation to and from her colonies, under proper precautions and certain pecuniary advantages. But England must not expect to obtain everything and give nothing. Thus spoke the haughty Spaniard, and his words found an echo in the heart of every true son of the Peninsula.*

Another cause had also tended to increase this irritation against England. Whilst carrying on his negotiations with Spain Walpole, though in favour of a pacific policy, had yet showed that he was prepared for war. He had dispatched a squadron of ten ships of the line to the Mediterranean. Single vessels had been ordered off to the West Indies. Merchants had been provided with letters of marque and reprisal. Troops had been sent to fortify Georgia. These demonstrations of hostility had not tended to allay the Spanish feeling against England. And hence it was that, when Walpole, on the dissolution of Parliament, set himself to carry out the provisions of

* "Walpole Papers." "Papers from Spain," by Keene. Coxe.

the Convention, he was met with obstacles which had not before arisen. The Crown of Spain had brought in a claim against the South Sea Company for the sum of £68,000 with respect to the Assiento contract. The Spanish ministers, aware that they had the support of their nation, now demanded that sum from the Company on pain of seizing its effects, and suspending the Assiento for negroes. The British Admiral was also requested to withdraw his squadron from the Mediterranean, as the King of Spain declined to discuss any proposals so long as such a scourge hung over him. Nor would the Court at Madrid enter into further negotiations with the English Government unless the Right of Search by Spain was fully recognised.

In the face of these demands Walpole felt himself powerless to adopt the pacific tone he desired. As Spain, angered and irritable, was ready to appeal to arms, so England hotly reciprocated the feeling. Both countries desired war. Englishmen burned to redress the wrongs of their sailors, and sweep the Guarda Costas from off the face of the seas. Whilst the Spaniards were determined to wipe out with blood the insults that had been passed upon their conduct in the defence of their commerce. A compromise was now out of the question. Keene was ordered to inform his Most Catholic Majesty that England insisted upon an absolute renunciation of the Right of Search by Spain; that she demanded the immediate payment of the sum fixed by the Convention, and an express acknowledgment of her claims in North America. Spain declined to accede to these requests, and war was declared by England, Oct. 19, 1739. And now at home all was national rejoicing—bells were rung merrily, fires were lighted, banquets were held, every one anticipated an easy

victory, and that the wealthy Spanish colonies would soon be annexed to the British Empire. "They may ring the bells now," said Walpole, with his usual clearness of foresight; "before long they will be wringing their hands."

Thus began the unjust war between Spain and England which was carried on for nine years, and then concluded without the one object—the Right of Search—which occasioned hostilities being settled. In examining the conduct of both Walpole and the Opposition, it is impossible to acquit either of gross malpractices. The Opposition hounded on the nation to a war for their own selfish ends, whilst Walpole, likewise for his own selfish ends, refused to discountenance the agitation. None knew better than Walpole that Spain was in the right, that what she had done had been permitted her by treaties, and that the grievances complained of on both sides were not in themselves of such a nature as to justify the terrible alternative of war. None knew better than he that England in her diplomatic altercations with Spain had only regarded the dispute from one prejudiced point of view; had given credence to all stories of Spanish cruelty and Spanish inspection, whilst disregarding all accounts of the illicit dealings of British traders. None knew better than he that the war into which Spain had been forced was unjust, cruel, and unnecessary.

Yet to save his cherished power he had not manfully resisted the hasty illogical passion of the country. He saw that the King was in favour of hostilities; that his Cabinet was divided, and encouraged the martial spirit of the sovereign; and that the people, only listening to half the truth, were eager for a crusade against Spain. To set his voice, though he knew it spoke correctly, against so overwhelming an unanimity of opinion would be to place

his power in jeopardy, and to give up what was dearer to him than life itself. Had he been as patriotic and conscientious as he was ambitious and astute, he would have laid his views before his sovereign and the Parliament. He would have openly stated that a war with Spain was a most unjustifiable proceeding, and warranted by no past acts. That such a war would leave England isolated, would offer every opportunity for the intrigues of France, and would recoil upon the aggressors. That as long as he remained at the head of affairs he would oppose all attempts to settle the disputes by hostilities, and that if it was the wish of the country to enter upon this fatal course, he would not hold himself responsible for the consequences, but tender his resignation.* Had he so acted he would have played the part not only of a great minister, but of a noble and honourable man. He preferred, however, the pomp and dignity of power to the dictates of honour, and in a few brief months he was to reap the reward of his interested and servile policy.

No sounder judgment has been passed upon the conduct of Walpole, and of the Opposition at this time, than is contained in the following remarks of Burke. "I observed one fault in his general proceeding," writes† the great orator, speaking of the Prime Minister, "he never manfully put forward the entire strength of his cause. He temporised; he managed; and, adopting very nearly the sentiments of his adversaries, he opposed their inferences. This, for a political commander, is the choice of a weak

* I cannot credit the statement of Horace Walpole that his brother did resign, but that the King refused to accept the offer. When the whole history of a career is at variance with an interested and unsupported assertion, one is justified in rejecting such evidence.

† "Thoughts on a Regicide Peace," p. 23.

post. His adversaries had the better of the argument, as he handled it, not as the reason and justice of his cause enabled him to manage it. I say this, after having seen, and with some care examined, the original documents concerning certain important transactions of those times. They perfectly satisfied me of *the extreme injustice of that war, and of the falsehood of the colours which, to his own ruin, and guided by a mistaken policy, he suffered to be daubed over that measure.* Some years after it was my fortune to converse with many of the principal actors against that minister, and with those who principally excited that clamour. *None of them, no not one, did in the least defend the measure, or attempt to justify their conduct, which they as freely condemned as they would have done in commenting upon any proceeding in history in which they were totally unconcerned.* Thus it will be. They who stir up the people to improper desires, whether of peace or war, will be condemned by themselves. They who weakly yield to them will be condemned by History."

CHAPTER XI.

A PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY. 1739—1741.

WAR had been declared, and the Government proceeded at once to assume the aggressive. The squadron of Admiral Haddock in the Mediterranean was reinforced. A powerful fleet was dispatched to the West Indies. The vessels on the home station were ordered into the Channel. Horace Walpole, the brother of the minister, was at the Hague, demanding the auxiliary troops stipulated in case of hostilities. Men were being quickly enlisted to complete the full strength of the English regiments at the different depôts. An additional force of marines was raised. At all the ports and throughout the different market towns the agents of the Admiralty were busy impressing men into the navy. English merchants were rapidly equipping privateers, and arming their trading vessels, for the protection of their commerce. Everywhere activity and preparation were visible.

The assumption of hostilities, and the grave issues now involved, rendered it necessary that Parliament should meet earlier than usual. On the 15th of November the Houses assembled. In his speech from the throne the King explained the reason why he had called together his faithful peers and commons, he referred to the augmentation of his forces by sea and land, but expressed his apprehension that

the "heats and animosities" which had been industriously fomented throughout the country had greatly encouraged Spain in the course she had pursued, and concluded by recommending union amongst all parties, and thus "convincing those who mean the subversion of the present establishment that this nation was determined and able both to vindicate its injured honour and to defend itself against all its open and secret enemies both at home and abroad."

After the address had been moved in the House of Commons, Pulteney rose up, not so much to criticize the King's speech as to vindicate the return of the Seceders to their seats. He said that those who had acted with him had thought it incumbent upon themselves, in order to clear their characters in the eyes of posterity, to discontinue their attendance from an assembly where a majority was resolved to sanction measures involving the disgrace of the King and the country. Fortunately for himself, and for those for whom he spoke, no vindication of their conduct was now necessary—such conduct having been fully justified by the recent declaration of hostilities against Spain, since every statement in that declaration had previously been brought forward by all who last session had opposed the Convention.

"There is not an assertion maintained in it," said he, alluding to the declaration of war, "that was not, almost in the same words, insisted upon by those who opposed the Convention. Since that time there has not one event happened that was not then foreseen and foretold. But give me leave to say, Sir, that though the treatment which we have since received from the Court of Spain may have swelled the account, yet it has furnished us with no *new* reasons for declaring war; the same

provocations have only been repeated, and nothing but longer patience has added to the justice of our cause. The same violation of treaties, the same instances of injustice and barbarity, the same disregard to the law of nations, which are laid down as the reasons of this declaration, were then too flagrant to be denied and too contemptuous to be borne. Nor can any one reason be alleged for justifying our going to war now that was not of equal force before the Convention." He then proposed that in carrying on the war, the Spanish settlements in the West Indies should be attacked, and that it should not be in the power of the Government to give up the conquests that might be gained. In conclusion he regretted that any reference had been made by his Majesty to "heats and animosities," and recommended his supporters to take no notice of the remark.

On Pulteney resuming his seat, Walpole rose up to reply. "After what passed last session," he began, "and after the repeated declarations of the honourable gentleman who spoke last, and his friends, I little expected that we should have this session been again favoured with their company. I am always pleased, Sir, when I see gentlemen in the way of their duty, and glad that these gentlemen have returned to theirs; though, to say the truth, I was in no great concern lest the service either of his Majesty or the nation should suffer by their absence. I believe the nation is generally sensible, that the many useful and popular Acts which passed towards the end of last session were greatly forwarded and facilitated by the secession of these gentlemen, and if they are returned only to oppose and perplex, I shall not at all be sorry if they secede again.

"The honourable gentleman who spoke last said that

they took this step because he and his friends conceived that measures were pursued which tended to ruin the honour and interest of this nation, and that they have returned to their duty because these measures are now at an end. Sir, I do not remember any one step which was taken in the whole of our transactions with Spain which has not been fully canvassed in Parliament, and as fully approved. The Parliament can best judge what is fit or not fit to be done, and while I have the honour of bearing any share in the administration I shall think myself safe, and my actions completely justified if they are, after mature deliberation, approved by a British Parliament. The stale argument of corruption never shall have any weight with me; it has been the common refuge of the disappointed and disaffected ever since government had a being; and it is an accusation that, like all other charges, though unsupported by proof, if advanced against the best and most disinterested administration, and pushed with a becoming violence, a pretended zeal for the public good, will never fail to meet applause among the populace. I cannot, however, believe that the honourable gentleman and his friends have found any reason to boast of the effects produced by their secession upon the minds of the people, for it was a very new way of defending the interests of their constituents to desert them when they apprehended them to be endangered. I should not have touched so much upon this subject, had I not been in a manner called upon to do it by what fell from the honourable gentleman who spoke last. I shall now proceed to take some notice of what he further advanced.

"The declaration of war against Spain is neither more nor less than the consequence which the King again and

again informed this House would arise from the Spaniards persisting in their refusal to do justice to his injured subjects; and what the honourable gentleman has said upon that head amounts to nothing more than that, after the Spaniards had absolutely refused to do that justice, his Majesty proceeded to those measures which he had then more than once promised to take. I am sorry that the honourable gentleman should so far distrust the royal assurances as rather to absent himself from his duty as a member of this House, than put any confidence in his Majesty's promise. But give me leave to say, Sir, that, from the well-known character of his Majesty, this declaration of war is no more than what the honourable gentleman and his friends had not only reason, but a right, to expect, even at the time of their secession, if the continued injustice of the Court of Spain should make it necessary to have recourse to arms. So that, upon the whole, I neither see how his Majesty's not issuing this declaration of war, when they were pleased to require it, was a good reason for their running from their duty, nor how its being issued at last is any apology for their return." After a few observations upon Pulteney's proposals, the address was carried without a division.*

And now began that bitter political warfare which was to know no truce till the repulses and disappointments of the last twenty years had been fully avenged. The struggle was unequal. With a divided and intellectually feeble Cabinet, a diminished majority, and a waning popularity, Walpole had to encounter an Opposition in accord with the sentiments of the country, and consisting of some of the most splendid talents of the time. Arrayed against him

* Chandler, quoted from Coxe.

in the Upper House were Carteret, Chesterfield, Argyle, Bedford, Gower, Lonsdale, Bathurst, Talbot, and Romney. In the Lower House he had to withstand the attacks of Pulteney, Wyndham, Polwarth, Pitt, Barnard, Shippen, Lyttleton, Grenville, Sandys, and Lord Gage. Every measure introduced by the minister was the signal for the unanimous dissent of the Opposition. The orders of the enemy were to harass Walpole on all sides, thwart his suggestions, laud his opponents, and finally drive him, by obloquy, resistance, and compulsory concessions, into resignation.

As usual, though not appearing on the scene, Bolingbroke was the Adviser-in-Chief of those who sat in front of the Treasury Bench. His rage against Walpole seemed all the fiercer and more vindictive now that a definite prospect was held out of his rival being hurled from power.

The long wished-for moment had at last arrived when he who had successfully supplanted the once brilliant St. John was, in his turn, to bite the dust of defeat, and know the bitterness of a foiled ambition.

"You must mate the insolence," he writes to Sir William Wyndham,* "and stop, at least, *if you cannot punish, the treachery of Walpole. I scruple not to use the word treachery, for he is a changeling, if he is not a traitor to Britain. If you cannot do one of these, you are undone.* I do not mean as a party; that consideration is too low for such conjuncture, but as a nation. I do not see your state so near as you do, but have the mortification to hear every man I see express contempt for a country they have been used to respect and even to fear. I have been asked, many times within this month, how it came to pass that we

* "Egremont Papers," Nov. 1, 1739. Coxe.

suffered ourselves to be insulted and pirated upon so many years together by the Spaniards; and to be bantered all the while by the trifling clauses in treaties, made by ministers who did not dare at that time to make a single reprisal? . . . Has France borne the least insult, the least invasion, the least menace from the Spaniards, without opposition or reprisal? Not one; and yet the amity between the two crowns subsists so well that your ministers seem afraid of it. From these instances, and others, men argue, unanswerably, that how little soever Walpole may think it for his interest to engage in a war, he might have reconciled, some years ago, his interest and that of his country, if he had not been resolved not only to postpone the latter to the former, but to give it up. . . . . In short, I should afflict and tire you if I repeated the twentieth part of what I have heard on this subject. I will conclude, therefore, this head by telling you what I take to be a great truth, that there is not a man of sense who does not *think you betrayed by a minister who is, on what motives he best knows, in a concert with your adverse party*, and who does not rather despise than pity you for bearing it."

"I say nothing to you about foreign affairs," he again writes to Wyndham;* "what I could say about them relatively to Britain I have said in former letters. *Never nation was so bantered, so imposed upon, and so lied as yours.* They who lied so impudently, when the Spanish treaty of Vienna was made, in order to have a pretence for arming at home, and keeping foreign troops in pay, may lie again with the same view, and the same success; though I think it impossible they should procure

* "Egremont Papers," Nov. 18, 1739. Coxe.

any better informations than that you mention, to colour what they advance. Nothing can be, I dare say, more foreign to the present politics of all the councils of Europe, except those of his Holiness, or perhaps the Queen of Spain, than the cause of the Pretender; and yet this trite expedient may be again employed. Dan. Pulteney used to say that the Pretender would never subdue us, but his name would. . . . . *If you cannot save your country, do not drop your protest against the men and the measures that ruin it.*"

"I have seldom known a cunning man an honest man," he resumes a few weeks later, on the same subject,* "and as seldom a wise man a knave. *I am persuaded that our cunning men will be the bubbles of their cunning, and that the measure, so full of good purposes as they pretend, will serve only to unmask them of their patriotism, and show the true visage of faction that lies behind it.* But be this as it will, if the Constitution of Britain can be saved, and the weak and wicked administration altered, you are just in the way to bring this about, on the principles laid down, and according to the solemn engagements taken twelve or fourteen years ago. . . . . The British constitution of government is at a great crisis, which must turn either to life or death. The disease cannot be long borne. God knows whether the remedies can. When I recall to my mind the several causes, and the gradual progress of their effects, which have brought us into this state, I am ready to apply to our times what Livy said of his, *Ad hæc tempora, quibus nec vitia nostra, nec remedia pati possumus, perventum est.* On this supposition I think myself happy to be what I am, a

* "Egremont Papers," Jan. 1, 1740. Coxe.

stranger in my own country, a sojourner in a foreign land. You ought to think yourself still happier, not because you have escaped a great part of the losses I have sustained, and the troubles I have gone through; but because you are still in a condition to speak and act in defence of the noblest cause a virtuous man can undertake."

"I said that Walpole," he writes, a few days afterwards, "might, by a contrary conduct, have confirmed his authority, and have acquired some degree of public approbation. I think I said right; for though it has been said and thought, and thought perhaps by himself, that authority would be more divided in case of a war, and the event of a war might influence the state of things at home to his prejudice, yet it is evident he had nothing of this kind to fear. After negotiating his country into a necessity of making war, and then endeavouring to prevent it by the most scandalous, and in him the most impudent treaty that ever was made, he is continued, with as much authority as ever, at the head of the administration of the government, and the direction of this very war is by consequence left to him. What then is it that ties up his hands? Spain may be hurt, and cruelly hurt, many ways: why is not one stroke given, no nor aimed to be given? Why does he not endeavour to shut those mouths by his efforts in a war that were opened against him by his negotiations? I could ask many questions of this kind, but I protest I could answer none of them, unless I supposed him *a pensioner of Spain, or a silly as well as a proud and obstinate creature;* so silly as not to see his advantage, which every man, even in this country, sees for him; so proud and obstinate that he determines, after having escaped ven-

geance for perverting the intentions of Parliament by his negotiations in consequence of them, to deserve it still more by disappointing the hopes of the nation by a languid war. And is this, my dear friend, the man in favour of whom the spirit of inquiry ought to *subside*, when he gives greater occasion for it by his manner of beginning the war than he did even by that of concluding the negotiations, if in truth he has concluded them? Is this the man the machine of whose power *no one is likely to have reputation enough to shake?* Is this the awful man against whom little intrigues, warily carried on, must be alone employed? Is this the man, the hero, whom the King of Terrors alone can subdue? *If this man be so great, how little must others be! An European dwarf may appear a giant, but it must be at Liliput.*"

The Mentor of the Opposition had no reason to complain of his pupils. Every measure advocated by Walpole, or by those who sat on his side of the House, was met either with the most hostile objections, or else led to such incessant debate as to gravely interfere with the labours of the session. One by one the minister was forced to support plans of which he disapproved. He agreed to the bill of Pulteney "for the Encouragement of Seamen," though, by its clauses, the public would be deprived of all share in prize-money. He approved of a motion for an increase in the number of cruisers for the protection of English commerce, though such assent was tantamount to a charge of carelessness on the part of his Government. He declared, contrary to his strongest convictions, that no peace should be concluded with Spain unless the Right of Search was abandoned by the Spaniards. Whilst, on the other hand, he had to withdraw schemes—such as the Bill for Registering Seamen

capable of service—the advantages of which he was fully assured. The proud minister, who had formerly forced his measures upon the country by the high hand of parliamentary majorities, and had summarily dismissed all colleagues who disagreed with him, was now compelled, in order to preserve his darling power, to acquiesce in the views of his opponents, to be blind to the intrigues of Newcastle, and to tolerate the lukewarmness of Hardwicke. Bolingbroke, watching with spiteful eyes the conduct of Walpole, knew that such humility prophesied victory, and wrote encouraging his disciples to further efforts.

And now, amid these feuds and jealousies, arrived the welcome news of the capture of Porto Bello, one of the richest of the Spanish possessions. Situated on the northern side of the isthmus which divides the Atlantic from the Pacific, to its famous marts were brought the precious metals of Chili and Peru, the manufactures of Europe, and the heavily freighted galleons from Old Spain. It was a prize not only valuable from the blow it dealt to the enemy, but also from the vast stores of wealth—bullion, precious minerals, colonial produce, the most exquisite manufactures—secreted within its crowded vaults. Great was the joy of the people at the success of the English fleet. "No Roman Consul," writes Tindal, "after reducing a province, ever received greater marks of public applause from his country than did Admiral Vernon upon the demolition of Porto Bello." By the Opposition the victory was hailed with intense delight, for Vernon was a personal enemy of Walpole, and it thus offered an opportunity for Pulteney and Wyndham, whilst the thanks of Parliament were being tendered to the Admiral, to irritate the Prime Minister by unduly extolling the act of the gallant sailor.

The reduction of Porto Bello only whetted the public appetite for further enterprises. Nothing would now content the Duke of Newcastle and the Opposition but the utter destruction of the Spanish settlements in the New World. An English squadron was dispatched to the South Sea, under Commodore Anson, for the purpose of ravaging the coasts of Peru and Chili. A fleet of twenty-seven sail of the line, commanded by Sir Chaloner Ogle, and supported by fire-ships, frigates, and transports, with upwards of ten thousand troops on board, was sent to the West Indies to reinforce Vernon and to co-operate with Anson, by means of conveying intelligence across the Isthmus of Darien. In order not to interrupt the narrative of this expedition against Spanish America, let me somewhat anticipate events. The land-forces were commanded by Lord Cathcart, a skilful and experienced soldier, who, unfortunately for the fate of the expedition, died of fever soon after his arrival at the West Indies. The command now devolved upon Brigadier-General Wentworth, an irresolute, feeble, and obstinate officer. Between Vernon and Wentworth there was ill-blood; the sailor had a contempt for all aid to be derived from the troops, whilst Wentworth held that the support of the fleet was almost valueless. After a period of inaction, these two jealous and badly coupled commanders resolved to attack Carthagena. The expedition was a complete failure, and the fleet sailed back to Jamaica. Then, after threatening St. Jago de Cuba and Panama, the unlucky commanders had to return home without having effected a single conquest of importance, and with the loss of twenty thousand men. To add to these misfortunes, a terrible storm had meanwhile wrecked the fleet of Anson and rendered him incapable of

carrying out the naval programme he had drawn up. These failures gave rise to a strong feeling throughout the country, the public disappointment was visited upon the Government, and a mischievous impulse given to the rapidly increasing unpopularity of Walpole.

On the prorogation of Parliament the King crossed over to Hanover, the affairs of the nation being intrusted to the hands of Walpole and Newcastle. Between these two once friendly ministers frequent were the bickerings and disputes that now broke out. Newcastle, who, when Walpole was in the zenith of his power and popularity, was the most servile and compliant of colleagues, now, with the truculence of the timid man whose fears have been dispelled, opposed on all occasions the views of the Prime Minister, and hastened to assert his own independence. We are told that the most violent and indecorous altercations took place at the meetings of the Cabinet, and that, had it not been for the friendly counsels of his brother Horace and Mr. Pelham, Walpole at all hazards would have pressed the King to dismiss his arrogant and obstructive colleague.

A few of the causes of difference have been handed down to us. It was the object of Newcastle to send all ships that could be spared from the fleet to strengthen the squadron of Vernon and of Ogle; Walpole, on the other hand, was of opinion that the affairs of Europe were being too much sacrificed to the situation in America, and he feared that in the defenceless state of the coast England might become an easy prey to the enemy. It so happened that the *Grafton*, a ship of seventy guns, had been disabled for service in the West Indies, and it was proposed by Newcastle to send the *Salisbury*, a

sixty-gun ship, in her place. To this Walpole objected, and, irritated out of his habitual good humour, exclaimed, "What, may not one poor ship be left at home? Must every accident be risked for the West Indies, and no consideration paid to this country?" Newcastle having answered that the number of Ogle's squadron should not be diminished, Walpole replied in a long speech, in the course of which he passionately exclaimed, "I oppose nothing, I give in to everything; am said to do everything; am to answer for everything; and yet, God knows, I dare not do what I think right. I am of opinion for having more ships of Sir Chaloner Ogle's squadron behind; but I *dare not*, I *will not*, make any alteration." Then when the Archbishop of Canterbury proposed that the matter should be taken into consideration another day, he opposed it, and said, "Let them go, let them go."*

A scene of still greater petulance occurred soon after the King's return from Hanover. A difference of opinion had prevailed in the Cabinet, respecting an application to be made to certain foreign Courts, in which the views of Walpole had been overruled, and the Prime Minister bitterly complained to the King that the divisions in the Cabinet interfered with public business. In the next audience the King remonstrated with the Duke of Newcastle, and said, "As to the business in Parliament, I do not value the Opposition, if all my servants act together, and are united; but if they thwart one another, and create difficulties in transacting public business, then indeed it will be another case." Returning from the royal presence Newcastle met Walpole, and mentioned the disagreeable

* The Duke of Newcastle to Lord Hardwicke, October 1, 1740. "Hardwicke Papers." Coxe.

remarks which he had just heard from the King, insinuating that they were due to the instigation of Walpole. The Premier denied the charge, though admitting that he agreed with the sentiment. Newcastle said, "When measures are agreed amongst us it is very right that everybody should support them, but not to have the liberty of giving one's opinion before they are agreed is very wrong." Walpole indignantly replied, "What do you mean? The war is yours—you have had the conduct of it—I wish you joy of it."*

These unseemly divisions were interpreted by friend as well as foe as the prelude to the downfall of the minister. But Walpole was now to make a bold bid to preserve his power. The Opposition were, as we have seen, divided into the disaffected Whigs, the Tories, and the Jacobites. From neither the disaffected Whigs nor the Tories could the minister hope for political support, but the Jacobites were a party as yet untried by him. A general election was approaching: what if he were to adopt the same tactics that Sunderland, years ago, had employed, and, by pretending to favour the Pretender, gain the votes of his adherents? The Jacobites were not opposed to peace, they were indifferent to the war with Spain, their politics and their patriotism were centred in the one object of the Restoration of the Stuarts. Though a notorious adherent of the House of Hanover, and regarded by every wearer of the White Cockade as a bitter enemy to the exiled family, Walpole resolved to dig a pit and make an effort to snare the Pretender.

Thomas Carte, the historian, was then in England and

* The Duke of Newcastle to Lord Hardwicke, October 25, 1740. "Hardwicke Papers." Coxe.

on the point of setting out for Rome. Walpole begged the favour of a visit, and in the course of the interview intrusted Carte with a particular message to the Chevalier St. George. In this message the wily minister declared, in spite of his past political conduct, his secret attachment to the House of Stuart, and promised the Pretender every assistance in his power, provided he knew the views of James with regard to the Church of England, and the course he would adopt towards the Princes of the House of Hanover, if he were called to the throne. The mission was duly performed, and the following studied reply returned to Carte by him whom adherents called James III., friends the Chevalier de St. George, and foes the Pretender.*

"ROME, *July* 10, 1739.

"The message you bring could not but appear very singular and extraordinary to me, because you deliver it only from second hand, and that I have no sort of proof of your being authorised by the person in question, who cannot but feel that it is natural for me to mistrust what may come from him. It may be, and I hope it is, the case that he wishes me and my cause well, and I am sensible it may be greatly in his power to serve both. If he has really my interest at heart, let him send to me some trusty friend and confidant of his, to explain to me his sentiments and views; and if he pursues measures which manifestly tend to my restoration, I shall be persuaded of his sincerity, and shall consider and reward him

* Appendix, "History of England," Stanhope, vol. iii. This letter is indorsed, in Walpole's handwriting, "This original letter written to Mr. Thomas Carte, when at Rome, and given to him, was delivered to me by the said Mr. Thomas Carte, Sept. 15, 1739, together with the heads" (of a plan of Government). This offer of Walpole and the reply of the Pretender are both carefully suppressed by Coxe in his Biography.

after my restoration, in proportion to the share he may have had in bringing it about. But whatever may or may not be in this matter, I have no difficulty in putting it in your power to satisfy him authentically on the two articles about which he is solicitous, since, independent of his desires, I am fully resolved to protect and secure the Church of England according to the reiterated promises I have made to that effect, and shall be ready, after my restoration, to give all reasonable security which a fresh Parliament can ask of me for that end. As for the Princes of the House of Hanover, I thank God I have no resentment against them, nor against any one living. I shall never repine at their living happily in their own country after I am in possession of my kingdoms, and should they fall into my power upon any attempt for my restoration, I shall certainly not touch a hair of their heads. I thought it proper to explain in this manner my sentiments on these heads, not absolutely to neglect an occurrence which may be of great importance if well grounded, and if otherwise no inconvenience can arise from what I have here said.

"JAMES R."

No one can believe that in this offer of Walpole he really intended to desert the cause of the King, and advocate that of the House of Stuart. Men of his ambitious and unscrupulous character never forsake what they have formerly held, unless a decided advantage is to be gained. I estimate so little both the sincerity and the integrity of Walpole that, had the star of the Stuarts been in the ascendant, and the Pretender about to be restored to the throne of his ancestors, there would have

been, to my mind, no improbability in this offer of allegiance to the Chevalier. To Walpole, provided he remained at the head of affairs, it mattered little under which king he served. But the cause of the Pretender was at this time an utterly hopeless one. James had tired out France; he had tired out Spain; he was a dependant upon the Vatican, with slender means, and destitute of military support. What chance had he, with a European war looming in the distance, of gaining the crown of England? No one knew better than Walpole—thanks to his agents and spies at Rome, Madrid, and Versailles—the position and prospects of the Pretender. But the Jacobites numbered some forty votes in the House of Commons, and to lure them in this his hour of extremity from the Opposition to his own side by specious and illusory promises was a scheme worth attempting. It was with this object in view he intrusted his message to Carte. That James should have seriously entertained the proposal coming from such a quarter, and thought it worthy of a reply, is only another instance of the childish and easily deluded character of the Pretender. Any other man who had showed himself so open and decided a foe to the House of Stuart as Walpole had been would have hesitated before pretending to give in his adherence—such duplicity he might reasonably think would deceive no one; but the minister evidently knew the weakness and the vanity of him for whom he was bidding.

The next measure of Walpole, had it been carried out, would have greatly propitiated the nation. One of the most frequent complaints against the "German rule" was that both George I. and his son regarded England as a foreign country, and that all their sympathies and

patriotism were centred in Hanover. They preferred their friends and counsellors to be Germans, instead of Englishmen; they were only happy when they quitted London for Herrenhausen; and the chief thing which they cared for in English politics was how far they would benefit Hanover. A minister who could sever the connection between Great Britain and the Electorate was sure of the support and the congratulations of all classes of Englishmen. This separation Walpole now set himself to effect.

"A little before Sir Robert Walpole's fall," records Speaker Onslow,* "and as a popular act to save himself, he took me one day aside, and said, 'What will you say, Speaker, if this hand of mine shall bring a message from the King to the House of Commons, declaring his consent to having any of his family, after his own death, made by Act of Parliament incapable of inheriting and enjoying the Crown and the Electoral dominions at the same time?' My answer was, 'Sir, it will be as a message from heaven.' He replied, 'It will be done.'" Had Walpole succeeded in his intention, it would doubtless have made him regain much of his lost popularity; but, whether the King objected, or the Prince of Wales caused his friends among the Opposition to oppose the measure, or whatever was the reason at work, the minister thought it prudent to abandon his design, and the subject was never again discussed.

But the time had now arrived when the wisdom of his tactics and the devotion of his friends were to be put to no ordinary test. On November 18, 1740, the Parliament assembled. It was the last session, and the Opposition, mindful of the approaching elections, did everything in their power to damage the reputation of the minister.

* Coxe.

Both in the Lords and in the Commons the Address gave rise to much hostile debate, and to several harsh reflections upon Walpole. Foiled in their attempt to obtain a majority upon the Address, the Opposition now employed all the arts of parliamentary warfare to worry and harass the minister. He was asked night after night to produce papers which, if laid before the House, might be used so as to criminate him, but which if he refused to make public, led to severe remarks upon his unconstitutional secrecy and want of candour. Every failure in the West Indies was attributed to him—every success was in spite of his orders. The capture of Porto Bello had been due entirely to the skill of Admiral Vernon, and independent of all instructions sent out by the Government. The repulse at Carthagena and the inactivity of the Mediterranean squadron, however, were visited upon Walpole, and in nowise attributed to the officers in command.

On all sides the bitterest and most contradictory strictures were passed upon him. He was accused of bringing the country to beggary by going to war; he was accused of being indifferent to the honour of his country by not going sooner to war. He was charged with playing into the hands of the Jacobites; he was condemned for encouraging the German sympathies of his sovereign. He was the foe of the Catholic Church; he was the enemy of the Protestants. He was too parsimonious; he was too extravagant. He was a tyrant; he was a puppet. By some he was considered as the most subtle and astute of men; by others as almost weak and incapable. In the eyes of Lord Carteret he was a minister who had neither wisdom nor conduct. "He may have a little low cunning," admitted his Lordship, "such as those have who buy

cattle in Smithfield Market, or such as a French valet makes use of for managing an indulgent master; but the whole tenor of his conduct has shown that he has no true wisdom—this our allies know and bemoan; this our enemies know and rejoice in!" And so hot was party hate, so blind its prejudices, that there were many who regarded this as the true estimate of him who had been at the head of affairs for nearly twenty years, and who was considered by Europe as the greatest Englishman of his day.

It was not long before this animosity was to assume a direct and openly aggressive form. The Opposition resolved to make a simultaneous and, as they imagined, an united attack upon Walpole. Carteret was to open the fire in the Peers; Sandys, who was called the Pym of his day, was to introduce the subject in the Commons. The day fixed was the 13th of February. Shortly before the appointed time Sandys crossed over to the side of Walpole, and said that, as he intended on the next Friday to bring an accusation of several articles against him, he thought it only right that the minister should be duly apprised of the fact. Walpole thanked him for his courtesy, and Sandys, returning to his seat, then stood up and said that, as on the ensuing Friday he intended to open a matter of great importance which personally concerned the First Minister of the Crown, he hoped that the Right Honourable Gentleman would be in his place.

With great dignity Walpole rose and replied that he would not fail to attend the House on that day, that his conscience acquitted him of all misconduct deserving accusation, and that he desired nothing more than a calm and impartial hearing. Then, laying his hand on his

breast, he said, "*Nil conscire sibi, nulli pallescere culpæ.*" Pulteney, who happened to sit next him—it being the etiquette in those days for Privy Councillors to occupy the Treasury Bench—quietly remarked to the House that the Right Honourable Gentleman's Latin was as false as his logic, for Horace had written "*nullâ pallescere culpâ.*" Walpole, however, defended the accuracy of his quotation, and offered to bet Pulteney a guinea on the subject. The challenge was accepted, and the dispute was referred to Hardinge, the Clerk of the House, who had the reputation of being an excellent scholar. The decision was given in favour of Pulteney, and Walpole, at once acquiescing in the judgment, handed the guinea to his corrector. Pulteney gravely received the coin, and then, holding it up to the House, said laughingly, "It is the only public money I have received for many years, and it shall be the last!"*

On the day appointed the House was crowded. Seats had been secured as early as six o'clock in the morning. In the galleries, in the body of the House, and in the places set apart for the privileged, not a vacant seat was to be had; whilst outside Westminster Hall a large crowd had gathered together, waiting with curiosity to learn the result of the debate. At one o'clock the Speaker took the chair. Sandys rose up and opened the attack. After prefacing his remarks with the constitutional right of any Englishman to arraign a minister who had forfeited his trust, he said he would divide his speech into three heads—a consideration of our Foreign Affairs, a review of

* The guinea is now in the British Museum. The quotation is not a very hackneyed one:—

"Hic murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi, nullâ pallescere culpâ."

"Let this be one's brazen wall, to be conscious of no ill, to turn pale with no guilt."—Horace, Epistle I. Book i.

our Domestic Affairs, and a criticism upon the Conduct of the present War. In dealing with foreign affairs he inveighed against the desertion of "our old and natural ally, the House of Austria," and to that "close friendship and correspondence with the Court of France which, to the infinite disadvantage of this nation, has continued ever since, and which has now at last brought the balance of power into the utmost danger, if not to inevitable ruin." He then strongly denounced the Treaty of Hanover, the Treaty of Seville, the Spanish Convention, and the weak and pusillanimous manner in which England had permitted the Emperor to lose Sicily and Naples, and "our old enemy the House of Bourbon" to be aggrandized by the annexation of Lorraine.

Nor, in turning to domestic matters, did he see much to cheer him. The debt of the army had swelled to the alarming total of two millions. The Sinking Fund, though it had produced no less than fifteen millions, yet had not led to the diminution of the National Debt. He felt himself therefore bound to accuse the Government of being guilty of the most unnecessary expenditure. A larger standing army than was required had been retained. Squadrons had been fitted up at an enormous cost for no object whatever. The expenses of the Civil List had been greatly increased. Bribery and corruption were the rule throughout the great Government departments, to the injury of the public and the detriment of trade. Burdensome taxes had been retained simply because their collection required a large staff of placemen. In short, all the objections he had to bring forward were those characteristic of a corrupt and profligate administration.

With regard to the conduct of the war, he there saw the

same evils and mismanagement. Admiral Vernon had sailed for the West Indies "with a fleet badly equipped and badly supplied." No attention had been paid to his incessant applications for reinforcements and supplies. Admiral Haddock had been equally neglected, and, in the minds of all impartial people, the failures of our fleet were to be attributed entirely to the want of proper care and supervision on the part of the Government. It was to the false foreign policy of the Government that England now found herself in an isolated position. It was to the extravagance of the Government that England found her debts increased, her taxes heavy, and her trade oppressed. It was owing to the inattention and inactivity of the Government that the war with Spain had so miserably miscarried.

"Things being thus," said he, glowing with indignation, "he should now name the author of all these public calamities. After what he had said, he believed no one could mistake the person to whom he alluded: every one must be convinced that he meant the Right Honourable Gentleman who sat opposite to him, and the whole House might see that the Right Honourable Gentleman took it to himself; that against him there was as general a discontent as had ever arisen against any minister. Although this discontent had lasted so long, yet the Right Honourable Gentleman still continued in his post, in opposition to the sense of the country; this was no sign of the freedom of government, because a free people neither will nor can be governed by a minister whom they hate or despise.

"He had well considered the difficulty of personal attacks, yet he should obey the voice of the people, and act like an honest man, and like an Englishman, in making his motion. He himself, merely a private man,

protected only by his innocence, would fearlessly enter the lists against one who usurped a regal power, who had arrogated to himself a place of French extraction, that of *sole minister*, contrary to the nature and principles of the English Constitution. He was well aware that a common excuse would be urged in his defence, that Parliament had given a sanction to many of the acts which he had enumerated. But the Right Honourable Gentleman could not urge this exculpation without subjecting himself to the charge of gross inconsistency. He himself had accused the Earl of Oxford of departing from the principles of the Grand Alliance, and of having sacrificed the country to France, although all his measures had been sanctioned by Parliament. He observed likewise that Parliaments were not infallible, but resembled other Courts of Justice. They judge from information, and if convinced that they had been misled by false information, should equally acknowledge their error, and alter their opinions.

"If it should be asked," he continued, "why I impute all these evils to *one person*, I reply, because that one person grasped in his own hands every branch of government; that *one person* has attained the sole direction of affairs, monopolized all the favours of the Crown, compassed the disposal of all places, pensions, titles, ribands, as well as all preferments, civil, military, and ecclesiastical; that *one person* made a blind submission to his will, both in elections and Parliament, the only terms of present favour and future expectation and continuance in office; and declared, in this very House, that he must be a pitiful minister who did not displace an officer that opposed his measures in Parliament.

"But even let us suppose no oversight, error, or crime in his public conduct, and that the people were satisfied

with his administration, the very length of it is in itself a sufficient cause for removing him. In a free government too long possession of power is highly dangerous. Most Commonwealths have been overturned by this very oversight; and in this country we know how difficult it has often proved for Parliament to draw an old favourite from behind the Throne, even when he has been guilty of the most heinous crimes. I wish this may not be our case at present; for though I will not say, nor have I at present any occasion for showing, that the Favourite I am now complaining of has been guilty of any crimes, the proof may then be come at, and the witnesses against him will not be afraid to appear. Till you do this, it is impossible to determine whether he is guilty or innocent; and considering the universal clamour against him, it is high time to reduce him to such a condition that he may be brought to a fair, an impartial, and a strict account.

"As I am only to propose an address to remove him from the King's counsels," he went on, "I have no occasion to accuse him of any specific crime. The dissatisfaction of the people and their suspicion of his conduct are a sufficient foundation for such an address, and a sufficient cause for his removal. For no sovereign of these kingdoms ought to employ any minister who is disagreeable to the people, and when any minister is become unpopular it is our duty to inform the King, that he may give general satisfaction by his removal. I solemnly declare that I have no resentment against the Right Honourable Gentleman; I have, on the contrary, received personal civilities from him, and have no private motives to wish him ill. But I think it necessary, for the welfare of my country, that he should no longer continue in his Majesty's counsels who has

bewildered himself in treaties, who has forfeited his word with every court in Europe, and against whom the voice of the world is in unison with that of his country. I therefore move, 'that an humble Address be presented to his Majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to remove the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole from his Majesty's presence and counsels for ever.'"*

The motion having been seconded by Lord Limerick, it was suggested that Walpole should be ordered to retire from the House during the debate.

"This was strongly opposed," writes a friend,† "on account of the unprecedented manner of proceeding, in charging a gentleman in general terms, by speeches only, without stating particular facts as crimes, or bringing any evidence to prove them, or him to be the author and adviser of them; and then to expect that he should withdraw, and after that other members may be at liberty to stand up and allege other things, in the same general way, against him, without his being present to hear and make his defence. In a little time the egregious absurdity of this motion made the proposers drop it without any division." It was finally agreed that the minister should be allowed to hear every charge made against him and then be called upon to reply.

Thus, sitting in his place, the once all-powerful Walpole had to listen to the fierce invectives of Pitt, to the caustic wit of Pulteney, to spiteful allusions to former ministers whose conduct had been the subject of parliamentary inquiry—to Suffolk, Clarendon, and Lauderdale—and to

* Coxe. The substance of this speech was taken from an abstract made by Mr. Fox.

† Rev. H. Etough to Rev. Dr. Burch. Coxe.

stories of favourites who had basked in the sunshine of royal intimacy only to be cast out into the bleak coldness of infamy and desertion. When his accusers had ceased their bitter diatribes the supporters of the minister rose up in his defence. On the side of the Ministerialists the speeches of Pelham, Stephen Fox, and Sir Charles Wager made the greatest impression upon the House. They vindicated the foreign and domestic policy of the Government, regarded the motion as highly out of order, and powerfully declaimed against the injustice of proposing to punish a most distinguished member of the House upon general allegations only.

Nor were those who defended the accused confined to his political adherents. Lord Cornbury, the stoutest of Tories, opposed the motion on account of its tendency to introduce an inquisitorial system. "The advocates for the motion," he said, "endeavour to advance a charge of *accumulative* guilt, to aggravate one crime by the superaddition of another, and rather to intend a popular censure than a legal condemnation. I suppose no man will suspect that an unjust partiality in favour of the gentleman whose conduct is now the subject of examination influences me to censure this mode of proceeding, since no man can want reasons against it of the greatest weight—reasons which deserve the closest attention from every man of prudence and virtue, every man who regards his own safety or the happiness of future generations. No man, whose judgment is not overborne by his resentment, and whose ardour for vengeance has not extinguished every other motive of action, can resolve to give the sanction of his voice to a method of prosecution by which the good and the bad are equally endangered, and which will make the

administration of public affairs destructive to the purest integrity and the highest wisdom. . . . I shall therefore continue to suppose every man innocent till he appears, from legal evidence, to be guilty; and to reject any charge of accumulative guilt upon the same principles of regard to liberty, to virtue, to truth, and to our Constitution, by which I have hitherto regulated my conduct, and for the same reasons for which I have condemned the measures of the administration, I shall now oppose the present motion."

Shippen, the leader of the Jacobites, and the chief representative of the Pretender's interest in England, rose up and contemptuously declared that "he looked on this motion as only a scheme for turning out one minister and bringing in another; that as his conduct in Parliament had always been regulated with a view to the good of his country, without any regard to his own private interest, it was quite indifferent to him who was in or who was out, and he would give himself no concern in the question." Saying this he quitted the House, accompanied by the whole body of his followers.

But it was left for Edward Harley, member for Herefordshire, and brother of the famous Lord Treasurer, to display the finest example of moderation and true political chivalry. He was one of the most prominent men of the Tory party, and his family had always been noted for their opposition to Walpole, yet he would not have the minister censured unfairly or condemned unheard. "Sir," he said, "I do not stand up at this time of night either to accuse or flatter any man. Since I had the honour to sit in Parliament I have opposed the measures of the administration because I thought them wrong; and as long as they are, I shall continue to give as constant an opposition to them. The state

of the nation, by the conduct of our ministers, is deplorable; a war is destroying us abroad, and poverty and corruption are devouring us at home. But whatever I may think of men, God forbid that my private opinion should be the only rule of my judgment! I should desire to have an exterior conviction from facts and evidences, and without this I am so far from condemning that I would not censure any man. I am fully satisfied in my own mind that there are those who give pernicious and destructive counsels, and I hope a time will come when a proper, legal, parliamentary inquiry may be made, and when clear facts and full evidence will plainly discover who are the enemies of their country. A Noble Lord, to whom I had the honour to be related, has been often mentioned in this debate. He was impeached and imprisoned; by that imprisonment his years were shortened; and the prosecution was carried on by the Honourable person who is now the subject of your question, though he knew at that very time that there was no evidence to support it. I am now, Sir, glad of this opportunity to return good for evil, and to do that Honourable Gentleman and his family that justice which he denied to mine." *

Upon Walpole this division in the camp of the foe was not lost. In spite of the motion of Sandys, and the hostility to the minister, the Opposition were not united. They wished the resignation, perhaps the punishment, of Walpole, but they were at variance with regard to the choice of his successor, and to the measures afterwards to be pursued. To destroy is easier than to erect. The death of Wyndham,† which happened shortly before the meeting

* Coxe.

† "In my opinion," says Speaker Onslow, "Sir William Wyndham was the most made for a great man of any one that I have known in this age. Everything about him seemed great. There was no inconsistency in his composition; all the parts of his character suited and helped one another."

of Parliament, had broken the link which connected the disaffected Whigs and the Tories. Between the two parties there was now a coldness, which only wanted opportunity and encouragement to degenerate into animosity. Each was jealous of the other, and this jealousy was all the more increased now that from the Pisgah of opposition the Canaan of office opened out before their gaze. When Walpole was overthrown, who were to be the chief advisers in the State, the Tories or the disaffected Whigs? The answer to this question widened the breach between the two parties, and prevented reconciliation. On the other hand, the Jacobites, whether it was that Shippen was a personal friend of Walpole, or that they believed that there was some truth in the message delivered by Carte to their King, were now not hostile to the minister. It also seems that certain of the Tories and many of the Jacobites had been offended at the manner in which the details of the motion had been arranged. Their opinions had not been asked, their suggestions treated with indifference; they were regarded as mere voting-machines—expected to follow but not to advise. Angered at this behaviour on the part of their political leaders, they now displayed their resentment by refusing to support a measure in which they had no voice.

Regarding with cynical pleasure this division in the Opposition, Walpole felt he had no cause for fear. A united Opposition could have worked his overthrow, but an enemy divided amongst themselves was the weakest of foes. His spirits rose as he watched his opponents, angry, disappointed, and painfully aware that they had been defeated, not because the object of their attack was invincible, but because they had displayed over-hurry and

bad generalship. "If we had waited," said a Whig, "we should have won—but we wanted to pull the fruit before it was ripe."

On the last of the speakers who was to precede him sitting down, Walpole rose up. He was in excellent temper; never had he been more ready; never had his banter been more exquisite. He saw that on the present occasion his real enemies were the soured Whigs. He complimented the Tories, he was gracious to the Jacobites, but he kept his weapons keen and polished for his onslaught upon the disaffected party.

"Sir," he said,* "it has been observed by several gentlemen, in vindication of this motion, that if it should be carried, neither my life, liberty, nor estate will be affected. But do the honourable gentlemen consider my character and reputation as of no moment? Is it no imputation to be arraigned before this House, in which I have sat forty years, and to have my name transmitted to posterity with disgrace and infamy? I will not conceal my sentiments, that to be named in Parliament as a subject of inquiry is to me a matter of great concern; but I have the satisfaction at the same time to reflect that the impression to be made depends upon the consistency of the charge, and the motives of the prosecutors. Had the charge been reduced to specific allegations, I should have felt myself called upon for a specific defence. Had I served a weak or wicked Master, and implicitly obeyed his dictates, obedience to his commands must have been my only justification. But as it has been my good fortune to serve

* Coxe. The substance of this speech was taken from Parliamentary Minutes in the handwriting of Walpole.

a Master who wants no bad ministers, and would have hearkened to none, my defence must rest on my own conduct. The consciousness of innocence is also sufficient support against my present prosecutors. A further justification is also derived from a consideration of the views and abilities of the prosecutors. Had I been guilty of great enormities, they want neither zeal and inclination to bring them forward, nor ability to place them in the most prominent point of view. But as I am conscious of no crime, my own experience convinces me that none can be justly imputed.

"I must therefore ask the gentlemen, from whence does this attack proceed? From the passions and prejudices of the parties combined against me, who may be divided into three classes: the Boys, the riper Patriots, and the Tories. The Tories I can easily forgive; they have unwillingly come into the measure, and they do me honour in thinking it necessary to remove me, as their only obstacle. What is the inference to be drawn from these premises? that demerit with them ought to be considered as merit with others. But my great and principal crime is my long continuance in office, or, in other words, *the long exclusion of those who now complain against me.* This is the heinous offence which exceeds all others: I keep from them the possession of that power, those honours and those emoluments, to which they so ardently and pertinaciously aspire. I will not attempt to deny the reasonableness and necessity of a party war; but in carrying on that war all principles and rules of justice should not be departed from.

"The Tories must confess that the most obnoxious persons have felt few instances of extra-judicial power. Wherever they have been arraigned, a plain charge has been

exhibited against them; they have had an impartial trial, and have been permitted to make their defence; and will they, who have experienced this fair and equitable mode of proceeding, act in direct opposition to every principle of justice, and establish this fatal precedent of parliamentary inquisition? and whom would they conciliate by a conduct so contrary to principle and precedent? Can it be fitting in them, who have divided the public opinion of the nation, to share it with those who now appear as their competitors? With the men of yesterday, the Boys in politics, who would be absolutely contemptible did not their audacity render them detestable? With the Mock Patriots, whose practice and professions prove their selfishness and malignity, who threatened to pursue me to destruction, and who have never for a moment lost sight of their object? These men, under the name of the Separatists, presume to call themselves, exclusively, the *nation* and the *people*, and under that character assume all power. In their estimation, the King, Lords, and Commons are a Faction, and *they* are the Government. Upon these principles, they threaten the destruction of all authority, and think they have a right to judge, direct, and resist all legal magistrates. They withdraw from Parliament because they succeed in nothing, and then attribute their want of success not to its true cause, their own want of integrity and importance, but to the effect of places, pensions, and corruption. . . . .

"Gentlemen have talked a great deal of Patriotism. A venerable word, when duly practised. But I am sorry to say that of late it has been so much hackneyed about that it is in danger of falling into disgrace: the very idea of true Patriotism is lost, and the term has been prostituted

to the very worst of purposes. A Patriot, sir! why, Patriots spring up like mushrooms? I could raise fifty of them within the four-and-twenty hours. I have raised many of them in one night. *It is but refusing to gratify an unreasonable or an insolent demand, and up starts a Patriot.* I have never been afraid of making Patriots; but I disdain and despise all their efforts. But this pretended virtue proceeds from personal malice, and from disappointed ambition. There is not a man amongst them whose particular aim I am not able to ascertain, and from what motives they have entered into the lists of Opposition."

Having prefaced his defence with this stinging introduction, he proceeded to examine in detail the charges brought against him. With regard to the foreign policy of his Government, he defended the course he had pursued in refusing to meddle with the differences between Spain and France occasioned by the dismissal of the Infanta. "Such a course," he said, "might have produced a rupture with France, and it was not our duty to interfere unless we had something very beneficial to expect from the acceptance." Then turning to the next article of accusation, the drawing up of the Treaty of Hanover, he most satisfactorily proved the necessity, at that time, of such a Convention.

"Sir," he said, "if I were to give the true history of that treaty, which no gentleman can desire, I should, I am sure I could, fully justify my own conduct; but as I do not desire to justify my own, without justifying his late Majesty's conduct, I must observe that his late Majesty had such information as convinced not only him, but those of his council, both at home and abroad, that some dan-

gerous designs had been formed between the Emperor and Spain, at the time of their concluding the treaty at Vienna, in May, 1725. Designs, Sir, which were dangerous not only to the liberties of this nation, but to the liberties of Europe. They were not only to wrest Gibraltar and Port Mahon from this nation, and force the Pretender upon us, but they were to have Don Carlos married to the Emperor's eldest daughter, who would thereby have had a probability of uniting in his person, or in the person of some of his successors, the crowns of France and Spain, with the Imperial dignity, and the Austrian dominions. It was therefore highly reasonable, both in France and us, to take the alarm at such designs, and to think betimes of preventing their being carried into execution. *But with regard to us, it was more particularly our business to take the alarm, because we were to have been immediately attacked.* I shall grant, Sir, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for Spain and the Emperor joined together to have invaded or made themselves masters of any of the British dominions; but will it be said, they might not have invaded the King's dominions in Germany, in order to force him to a compliance with what they desired of him as King of Great Britain? And if those dominions had been invaded on account of a quarrel with this nation, should we not have been obliged, both in honour and interest, to defend them?* When we were thus threatened it was therefore absolutely necessary for us to make an alliance with France; and that we might not trust too much to their assistance, it was likewise necessary to form alliances with the Northern Powers, and with some of the princes in Germany, which we never did, nor ever could do, without granting them immediate

subsidies. These measures were therefore, I still think, not only prudent but necessary, and by these measures we made it much more dangerous for the Emperor and Spain to attack us than it would otherwise have been. . . . . I do not pretend, Sir, to be a great master of foreign affairs. In that post in which I have the honour to serve his Majesty it is not my business to interfere; and as one of his Majesty's Council I have but one voice; but if I had been the sole adviser of the Treaty of Hanover, and of all the measures which were taken in pursuance of it, from what I have said, I hope it will appear that I do not deserve to be censured either as a weak or a wicked minister on that account."

In similar strains he defended having guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction, and his refusal to assist the House of Austria. "With regard," he said, "to the refusal of the Cabinet to assist the Emperor, though it was prudent and right in us to enter into that guarantee, we were not therefore obliged to enter into every broil the House of Austria might afterwards lead themselves into; and therefore we were not in honour obliged to take any share in the war which the Emperor brought upon himself in the year 1733, *nor were we in interest obliged to take a share in that war as long as neither side attempted to push its conquests farther than was consistent with the balance of power in Europe, which was a case that did not happen.* For the power of the House of Austria was not diminished by the event of that war, because they got Tuscany, Parma, and Placentia, in lieu of Naples and Sicily; nor was the power of France much increased, because Lorraine was a province she had taken and kept possession of during every war in which she had been engaged.

"As to the disputes with Spain," he continued, "they had not then reached such a height as to make it necessary for us to come to an open rupture. We had then reason to hope that all differences would be accommodated in an amicable manner; and whilst we have any such hopes it can never be prudent for us to engage ourselves in war, especially with Spain, where we have always had a very beneficial commerce. These hopes, it is true, Sir, at last proved abortive, but I never heard it was a crime to hope for the best. This sort of hope was the cause of the late Convention; if Spain had performed her part of that Preliminary Treaty, I am sure it would not have been wrong in us to have hoped for a friendly accommodation, and for that end to have waited nine or ten months longer, in which time the plenipotentiaries were, by the treaty, to have adjusted all the differences subsisting between the two nations. But the failure of Spain in performing what had been agreed to by this Preliminary put an end to all our hope, and then, and not till then, it became prudent to enter into hostilities."

He then dealt with the second charge in the motion, the maladministration of the finances. He denied that there had been no decrease in the National Debt, and that the Sinking Fund had not been applied to the discharge of the public burthens. On the contrary, he declared that within the last sixteen or seventeen years no less than eight millions of the Debt had been actually discharged by the due application of the Sinking Fund, and that at least seven millions had been taken from the Sinking Fund and applied to the relief of the Land Tax. He denied that any servant of the Crown had been removed from his offices on account of having opposed the measures of the administration in

Parliament. It was true that certain persons had been removed from their employments, but they were removed because "his Majesty did not think fit to continue them longer in his service. His Majesty had a right so to do, and I know no one that has a right to ask him, What dost thou? If his Majesty had a mind that the favours of the Crown should circulate, would not this of itself be a good reason for removing any of his servants? Would not this reason be approved of by the whole nation, except those who happen to be the present possessors? I cannot, therefore, see how this can be imputed as a crime, or how any of the King's ministers can be blamed for his doing what the public has no concern in, for if the public be well and faithfully served, it has no business to ask by whom."

He asserted that no expense had been incurred but what had been approved of and provided for by Parliament. "But this," added he with a sneer, "it seems, proceeded from bribery and corruption. Sir, if any one instance had been mentioned, if it had been shown that I ever offered a reward to any member of either House, or ever threatened to deprive any member of his office or employment, in order to influence his vote in Parliament, there might have been some ground for this charge; but when it is so generally laid, I do not know what I can say to it, unless it be to deny it as generally and as positively as it has been asserted; and, thank God! till some proof be offered, I have the laws of the land as well as the laws of charity in my favour."

Having now defended his foreign and domestic policy, he proceeded to deal with the charges relating to the misconduct of the war with Spain. He would not trespass

long upon the attention of the House. He was neither an Admiral nor a General, and, having nothing to do with the Army or the Navy, he was not responsible for the prosecution of the war. But were he to answer for everything no fault could be found. "It has from the beginning," he said, "been carried on with as much vigour, and as great care of our trade, as was consistent with our safety at home, and with the circumstances we were in at the beginning of the war. If our attacks upon the enemy were too long delayed, or if they have not been so vigorous or so frequent as they ought to have been, those only are to blame who have for many years been haranguing against standing armies; for without a sufficient number of regular troops in proportion to the numbers kept up by our neighbours, I am sure we can neither defend ourselves nor offend our enemies."

Then in conclusion, and with no little dignity, he asked, Why in this examination into his private conduct was there to be all shade and no light? Had he not remedied the fatal effects of the South Sea project, and supported the declining credit of the nation? Had he not been placed at the head of the Treasury when the revenues were in the greatest confusion, yet was not credit now at an incredible height? Had he not preserved tranquillity both at home and abroad, in spite of a violent and unreasonable opposition? Had not the true interests of the nation been pursued? Was not trade flourishing?

"What is this unbounded sole power which is imputed to me?" he asked; "how has it discovered itself, or how has it been proved? What have been the effects of the corruption, ambition, and avarice with which I am so abundantly charged?

"Have I ever been suspected of being corrupted? A strange phenomenon, a corrupter himself not corrupt. Is ambition imputed to me? Why then do I still continue a Commoner? I, who refused a White Staff and a Peerage. I had, indeed, like to have forgotten the little ornament about my shoulders," he said, alluding to his robes as a Knight of the Garter, "which gentlemen have so repeatedly mentioned in terms of sarcastic obloquy. But, surely, though this may be regarded with envy or indignation in *another place*, it cannot be supposed to raise any resentment in *this* House, where many may be pleased to see those honours which their ancestors have worn restored again to the Commons. Have I given any symptoms of an avaricious disposition? Have I obtained any grants from the Crown since I have been placed at the head of the Treasury? Has my conduct been different from that which others in the same station would have followed? . . . .

"But while I unequivocally deny," he said with dignity, "that I am sole and prime minister, and that to my influence and direction all the measures of Government must be attributed, yet I will not shrink from the responsibility which attaches to the post I have the honour to hold; and should, during the long period in which I have sat upon this Bench, any one step taken by Government be proved to be either disgraceful or disadvantageous to the nation, I am ready to hold myself accountable.

"To conclude, Sir, though I shall always be proud of the honour of any trust or confidence from his Majesty, yet I shall always be ready to remove from his councils and presence when he thinks fit; and therefore I should think myself very little concerned in the event of the present question, if it were not for the encroachment that will

thereby be made upon the prerogatives of the Crown. But I must think that an Address to his Majesty to remove one of his servants, without so much as *alleging any particular crime* against him, is one of the greatest encroachments that was ever made upon the prerogatives of the Crown; and therefore, for the sake of my Master, without any regard for my own, I hope all those that have a due regard for our Constitution, and for the Rights and Prerogatives of the Crown, without which our Constitution cannot be preserved, will be against this motion."

This speech was listened to with the deepest attention, and created a profound impression. On the House dividing the motion was lost by an immense majority.

"Sir Robert had yesterday a triumph," writes John Orlebar to Henry Etough,* "at least equal to if not greater than he ever had. . . . No motion was ever worse supported: even all the life and spirit was against it. Lord Cornbury, Mr. Harley, Mr. Bowes, and Mr. Southwell spoke against it; and the two Mr. Gores, Aldermen Perry and Marshall, Mr. Mackworth, Sir Herbert Packington, and Sir George Oxenden divided against it. It is supposed that thirty or forty of the Tories did not vote at all; among whom Shippen and the Lord Mayor are reckoned. It is computed that there were once near 450 members in the House; but upon the division there were only 106 for the address, and 290 against it; which, with the Tellers and Speaker, make but 401. . . . As this event has given me the utmost pleasure, I daresay it will give you no less; and therefore would not delay giving you an account of it till I could be more particular. I look upon the business of the session to be now over; and that the

* "Etough Papers," February 14, 1741. Coxe.

minority will immediately disband. It was said, before this question came on, that the Tories disliked it, and called it a blood-sucking measure; it seems to me an infatuation to persist, when they were not sure of all hanging together."

"Never did the English mail," writes Robert Trevor,* who had succeeded Horace Walpole at the Hague, "bring more agreeable news. People here did not know how much they loved Sir Robert till they had frightened themselves into the thoughts of losing him; and now they have recovered a little from their panic, they hardly know how to express their joy sufficiently; and I can assure you, it is as well behind my back as before my face, that his health is now daily toasted here."

Nor did the vote of censure proposed by Lord Carteret in the House of Lords fare better. Though the Lords in Opposition were far more united than their adherents in the Lower House, the motion was rejected by a majority of 49—108 as against 59. A warm protest, drawn up it is said by Bolingbroke, was, however, signed by 31 Peers. The Duke of Marlborough showed his opinion of the proceedings by moving, immediately after the defeat of the Opposition, a resolution to the effect "that any attempt to inflict any kind of punishment on any person, without allowing him an opportunity to make his defence, or without *proof of any crime or misdemeanour committed by him*, is contrary to natural justice, the fundamental laws of this realm, and the ancient established usage of Parliaments; and it is a high infringement on the liberties of the subject."

The result of this victory was to create a strong reaction in favour of Walpole. In both Houses friends rallied round him, and warmly congratulated him upon his

* "Walpole Papers," March 7, 1741. Coxe.

success. The country was also with him. There seemed something cowardly, something which was foreign to the straightforward dealings of Englishmen, in the attack that had been made upon him. Had he been arraigned on certain specific charges, instead of being accused in a loose irregular manner of general political misconduct, no objection would have been raised; but to propose a vote of censure in the terms adopted by Sandys and Pulteney was both weak and underhand. Now in the hour of his tribulation it was remembered what Walpole had done for the nation: how wisely he had controlled its finances; how he had raised trade to prosperity; how he had lowered taxation and had been just and far-seeing in most of his dealings. Something of his former popularity shed its halo round his name. "This weak attempt to ruin Sir Robert," writes Carte to the Pretender,* "has established him more firmly in the Ministry; and he was never known to have so great a levée as the next morning: though," added the writer, with a shrewdness which was soon verified, "it is marking him out to the nation; *and ministers once attacked in such a manner, though the attack be defeated, seldom keep their posts long*, by reason of the general odium; and the Duke of Buckingham had a worse fate in 1628. Sir Robert, however, is as yet absolute master of the administration." "You may get the better of me," said Walpole to Sandys. "But I am sure no other minister will ever be able to stand so long as I have done—twenty years."

The remainder of the session passed peacefully. The only event of importance—and it was one of great importance—was the grant of the subsidy to the Queen of Hungary. On the death of the Emperor, Charles VI., the last

* "Stuart Papers." Stanhope's "History of England," vol. iii. Appendix.

Prince of the House of Austria, without male issue, his dominions belonged, both by virtue of the Pragmatic Sanction, as well as by the right of blood, to his eldest daughter, the Archduchess Maria Theresa, married to Francis Lorraine, Grand Duke of Tuscany. The Archduchess therefore entered upon her possessions, received the homage of her people, and had her husband proclaimed co-regent. But a new claimant appeared upon the scene. Frederick II., called the Great, declared that certain portions of Silesia were his by right, and that he was prepared to support his demand by force of arms. Maria Theresa declined to admit his claim, and dispatched an army to resist the Pretender. A battle was fought at Molwitz, in which the Austrians were defeated, and the province of Silesia soon afterwards submitted to the Prussians. France now proposed to place Charles Albert, the Elector of Bavaria, upon the Imperial throne, and troops were at once raised to enforce this act of usurpation. A treaty was concluded between France and Prussia, and between France and the Elector of Bavaria, dividing amongst themselves the richest portions of the Austrian dominions, and paying no heed to the remonstrances of Maria Theresa. England was now alarmed at this high-handed robbery, and as a strong feeling prevailed in the country in favour of the young Empress, despoiled, and fighting single-handed against such terrible odds, the question came before Parliament. Walpole brought forward an address, proposing a subsidy of £300,000 to the Queen of Hungary, and declared that the Pragmatic Sanction should be maintained. His views were accepted by both Houses, and England, for the moment, stood out as the one stanch champion of the persecuted Queen.

CHAPTER XII.

RESIGNATION. 1741—1745.

PARLIAMENT had been dissolved. The King, in spite of Walpole's objections, had crossed over to Herrenhausen, to watch over the safety of his beloved Hanover, and throughout the country the battle of the elections was raging furiously. Each side was exerting its utmost to increase its majority. The minister knew that on the issue of this political struggle his tenure of power depended; whilst the Opposition openly declared that their defeat would be the ruin of the country. All the arts of parliamentary organization, all the tactics of political confederacies, were freely employed. On the one side were the Ministerialists with their programme of past services; on the other the Opposition with their prejudiced statements, their bitter personalities, and their *ad captandum* cries. Yet the contest was never in doubt. Every disadvantage was arrayed against the minister. His Cabinet were plotting against him; his long rule had tired out the nation, now anxious for new men and new measures; his opposition to the war with Spain had rendered him unpopular, for a war with Spain was, as Burke truly described it, a war for plunder; on his fall it was diligently circulated that numerous taxes would cease to be imposed, various long wished-for reforms be instituted, and a new

era of happiness and prosperity dawn upon the people. The country, discontented with the present, rose at this bait of the future, and allowed itself to be gulled.

The first election of importance took place at Westminster. This borough had always been true to the interests of Walpole, and no opposition was anticipated. Its members were Sir Charles Wager, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Lord Sundon, a Lord of the Treasury, and the husband of the favourite bedchamber woman to Queen Caroline. It so happened that it had fallen within the range of the official duties of Sir Charles to escort the King to Holland, and, as Sundon was far from popular, the Opposition resolved to contest the seat. Two candidates were started—Admiral Vernon, then the hero of the nation, and a Mr. Irwin, a man of large fortune. Still the representatives of the Government carried the day, and all would have been well had it not been for the indiscreet and overbearing conduct of Lord Sundon. In doubt as to the safety of his seat, he resolved to effect his return with the high hand of military compulsion. The polling-books were ordered to be closed, the hustings were surrounded by soldiers, and the High Bailiff commanded to read out that both Sir Charles Wager and Lord Sundon had been duly returned to serve in the ensuing Parliament.

This arbitrary and injudicious act spread like wildfire throughout the country, and, well fanned by the Opposition, was visited severely upon the Government candidates. Cries of "No tyranny!" "No soldiers!" "No forced voting!" filled the air, and turned several elections against the minister. In the West of England, thanks to the liberal subscriptions set on foot by the Prince of Wales, the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough, and by Pulteney,

to promote their interests, the Opposition were very successful. In Scotland the Duke of Argyle was exercising his powerful name to influence the elections, and most of the Scotch members who came up to town in the winter were found facing the Treasury Bench.

And now, in addition to these reverses, the tide of political events had also turned against the Government. The King had entered into a selfish and interested treaty with Prussia for the neutrality of Hanover, which could not, when made public, be acceptable to the English people. The failures at Carthagena and Cuba, news of which now for the first time crossed the Atlantic, exasperated the country, and were malignantly attributed to the improvidence and inattention of Walpole. Commerce was dull and insecure, owing to the seizure of our merchant vessels by Spanish frigates, and the minister was severely blamed for "not stationing properly a few small ships, which was often desired to be done." His conduct was still more bitterly commented upon when it became known that a powerful Spanish fleet had been dispatched from Barcelona, to attack the Austrian possessions in Italy. Why did Admiral Haddock allow such a proceeding? Why was he eternally stationed off the coast of Cadiz, blockading the Spanish flota? Yet, as Walpole remarked to his son Horace, if he had commanded Haddock to sail for Barcelona and prevent the embarkation for Italy, he would have been blamed for allowing the Cadiz flota to start for the West Indies, and have been accused of favouring Spanish trade, under the pretence of hindering an expedition that was now really designed.*

In fact the minister was in one of those unfortunate

* "Horace Walpole's Letters," December 3, 1741. Stanhope, vol. iii. p. 139.

positions that whatever he did was disapproved of. If he dispatched troops to the West Indies, he was disparaging the Navy. If he fitted out a fleet, he was neglecting the land forces. If he asked for supplies, he was too lavish. If he made no calls upon the public purse, he was too economical. He was accused of bringing the country to beggary, and in the same breath was charged with being averse to war. If he approved of a standing army, he was intimidating the people; if he voted for a reduction in the military establishment, he was leaving the country defenceless. If he sent cruisers to accompany a convoy of merchantmen, he was favouring a commercial coterie; if he refused to send cruisers, he was unmindful of the mercantile interests of the country. Why was taxation not reduced? Why was the war not more vigorously conducted? Why was the fleet stationed in the Atlantic and not in the Mediterranean? Why was the fleet at anchor in the Mediterranean and not in the Atlantic? In short, the English nation was in one of its most obstinate and inconsistent of moods, and refused to be satisfied.

The result of this feeling was to render the Opposition no longer weak, and the Government no longer formidable. "The elections are over," writes George Dodington * (whose patriotic motive for deserting the Ministerial ranks had been the refusal to grant him a peerage) to his brother apostate, the Duke of Argyle, "and our success in them has, I must confess, exceeded my most sanguine expectations. Upon the most exact examination and inquiry, I am convinced that Providence has, once more, put the fate of our country into our own hands, by realising the endeavours of the better sort of people, undeserving as we are

* "Melcombe Papers," June and July, 1741. Coxe.

of such a blessing, from the unparalleled profligacy of the highest and lowest orders of men amongst us. Cornwall gave the first foundation for any reasonable hopes, and Scotland has brought the work to such a degree of perfection that it would be, now, as criminal to despair of success, as it would have been, before, presumptuous to have expected it. . . . . The minister is a good deal startled at his Parliament. When they talk seriously to persons of note and knowledge, they don't pretend their majority is above sixteen. How they reckon them I know not; but I well know, that if we take proper measures, sixteen and nothing is the same thing; but if we do not, it is the same as sixty."

The consideration of these "proper measures" now occupied the attention of the Opposition. Clubs were to be countenanced and encouraged to watch over and defend elections. The leaders of the party were to be in constant communication with their adherents, advising them, putting them on their guard, and, if need be, assisting them in their finances. The names of Whig and Tory, with all their odious distinctions, were to be blotted out from the vocabulary of the Opposition, and the designation of "true Englishmen" substituted in their stead. A complete separation, social as well as political, was to take place between the Ministerialists and their foes. A supporter of Walpole and a supporter of Pulteney must never be seen together, never sit down at the same dinner-table, never take a hand at the same rubber, never participate in the same amusements. "What can an audience," writes Dodington, with the stern virtue of disappointed ambition, to the Duke of Argyle,* "composed of all denomina-

* "Melcombe Papers," June and July, 1741. Coxe.

tions, coming from all quarters of the town, think when they hear gentlemen charging a Ministry, with a force of argument and eloquence truly Roman, as the last and most profligate men, and the moment after the debate is over laughing and mingling with the very persons they have so justly and forcibly inveighed against, supping with their families, playing at their houses, crowding their assemblies, taking (and I fear, making) part of all their diversions? Must not the bulk of mankind that see, or are told of, this behaviour, conclude, that it is all representation and not reality; a trial of skill only in the noble science, where the masters, as soon as they leave the stage, are laughing together at those who thought them in earnest, and going home to share the money of the house?"

This time there was to be no possibility of failure. Chesterfield had himself undertaken the arrangement of matters. Before the meeting of Parliament the programme was to be definitely settled, so that leaders should know what was to be attacked and what supported. On the side of the Opposition was to be entire concert and coalition. The jealousies between Carteret and Pulteney were to be removed. The House of Commons was to be the battlefield; for the House of Lords with its slender and ill-disciplined minority would have, it was said, as much chance of success "as the late King of Sweden, at the head of his cook and butler, charging the Ottoman Empire at Bender." Walpole was to be intimidated by the numbers against him in his own Chamber. Should Onslow be proposed as Speaker, there was to be no opposition to his election, "he having by a certain decency of behaviour made himself many personal friends in the minority." But a dead set was to be made against any "servile and shame-

less tool" of the Court, who should be recommended as Chairman of Privileges and Elections, and "some Whig of a fair character" was to be proposed in his stead. The affair of Carthagena was to be severely criticized, and would perhaps give rise to a vote of censure. An Address was to be drawn up and delivered to the King, desiring him to make no peace with Spain unless the undoubted right of Great Britain to sail to the West Indies, without molestation or search, be expressly stipulated. "Such a question would surely be a popular one, and distressful enough to the Ministry," writes Chesterfield.*

Such were the tactics of the Opposition, and they were speedily to be brought into operation. Early in the December of 1741, after months of the most harassing anxiety, in enfeebled health, with his colleagues plotting to desert his administration, with the country against him, and a strong and perfectly instructed Opposition, burning to give him battle at the very outset of the session, Walpole went down to Westminster to be present at the opening of the Houses. In the speech from the Throne the King alluded to the war with Spain, the confederacy against the Queen of Hungary, and the conduct he had pursued towards his allies. He exhorted Parliament to put the country in such a condition as would assist its friends and defeat its enemies, and expressed the desire that all should act with unanimity, vigour, and dispatch.

To this last wish there was a speedy refusal. An Address of thanks was drawn up, when certain of the Opposition made objection to the words "for returning his Majesty the thanks of this House for his royal care in prosecuting the war with Spain." We are told that Wal-

* Chesterfield to Dodington, September 8, 1741. Coxe.

pole on this occasion acted with a weakness which he had never before exhibited.* Instead of presenting a bold front to his opponents, and, as First Minister of the Crown, declining to permit an alteration which would convey an indirect censure upon his past administration, he spoke almost in an apologetic tone—the war had not been very successful it was true, but it had not been so unsuccessful as many endeavoured to represent; there had been losses, yet these losses had been much exaggerated; he hoped better things were in store; but if it were the wish of the House, and for the sake of that unanimity the King had enjoined upon them, he would accede to the omission of the paragraph relating to the war with Spain.

Pulteney was not slow to take advantage of this unusual display of humility. "It is no wonder," he cried, "that the Right Honourable Gentleman willingly consents to the omission of this clause, which could be inserted for no other purpose than that he might sacrifice it to the resentment which it must naturally produce, and, by an appearance of modesty and compliance, pass easily through the first day and obviate any severe inquiries that might be designed." He then made a bitter attack upon the maladministration of the war, and repeated the accusations that Sandys had directed in the last session against the minister. His animosity even carried him so far as to condemn Walpole for complicity with the enemies of the Protestant Establishment.

But these charges roused the statesman to his wonted courage, and the old fire illumined his oratory. It was a time, said Walpole, for truth, for plain truth, for English truth. Why were all the misfortunes of the country

* Tindal. Coxe, p. 689.

heaped upon his shoulders? Did he occasion the war in Germany? Was it by his advice that war had been declared against Spain? Had he any hand in the death of the late Emperor, or in the death of the King of Prussia? Was he one of the advisers of Frederick the Great, or First Minister to the King of Poland? Was it owing to him that war had broken out between Russia and Sweden? Such was the state of affairs on the Continent. As for our domestic troubles, they were due entirely to the schemes and intrigues of the so-called Patriots. He had been accused of being influenced by the enemies of the Protestant Establishment, but was it not notorious that gentlemen opposite had been in treaty with the Pretender, and that the Jacobites had received orders from Rome to hasten his downfall? As for wishing to evade a more strict inquiry, if the gentleman who had thus publicly and confidently accused the Ministry would name a day for inquiring into the state of the nation, he, the arraigned minister, he who was to grow pale at the very idea of an investigation, would second the motion. This reply, says his son Horace, was delivered "with as much health, as much spirits, as much force and command as ever."*

The challenge of Walpole was accepted, and the 21st of January was fixed by Pulteney for the inquiry into the state of the nation.

On the assembling of Parliament the instructions of Chesterfield had been strictly carried out by the Opposition. Onslow had been proposed for the Chair, and no objection had been raised to the appointment. It was, however, very different when the name of the candidate to

* Coxe. Stanhope. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1741. Walpole's Letters.

be Chairman of Committees was laid before the House. It was known that the election of various members had been appealed against, and that the House would soon be required to decide upon their validity. From his official position, the Chairman of Committees had considerable influence in returning the verdict on all cases of contested elections, and it was therefore very natural that the Ministerialists and the Opposition should each wish to appoint a representative of their own views. The Government candidate was a Mr. Earle, one of the Lords of the Treasury, who had been Chairman of Committees during the last two Parliaments, but who was exceedingly unpopular. On the other hand the nominee of Pulteney and his adherents was a Dr. Lee, a man of high integrity, of good fortune, and much esteemed on both sides of the House. The claims of the rival candidates were keenly discussed; comparisons between the two were made; and when the question was put to the test of a division, the Government were defeated by a majority of four.

Walpole has been blamed for thus opposing the choice of his political foes; it would have been, it has been said, better policy to have yielded, and not to have unnecessarily irritated the Opposition. In this refusal to accept Dr. Lee, when we consider how valuable a partial judge would be to either party when sitting upon Election Committees, I see little to censure in the conduct of Walpole. Where he deserved blame, and where he displayed a want of prudence and of foresight, not habitual with him, was in nominating an unpopular candidate, instead of one who would have commanded—as Lee commanded—the esteem and friendship of members on both sides of the House. The defeat of Earle dealt a severe blow to the strength of

the Ministry, and was regarded as the insertion of that thin end of the wedge which was to sever the Cabinet in twain. The Opposition were in ecstasies at their victory. "You have no idea of their huzzas," writes the chatty Horace Walpole to his friend Mann, "unless you can conceive how people must triumph after defeats of twenty years together."

Dr. Lee was soon called upon to serve his party. Petitions against the elections came pouring into the House. At the present day all disputes arising out of elections are tried by certain Judges specially appointed for that purpose; before the appointment of these Judges all election petitions were referred to a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which was empowered to examine witnesses upon oath, and to decide upon the merits of the cases brought before it; but in the time of Walpole the whole House sat in judgment upon the inquiry, and the petition was accepted or rejected according to the voting of the members present. The consequence of this system was that justice on almost every occasion gave place to party considerations. When a Whig was petitioned against, a Tory as a matter of course supported the inquiry. When the seat of a Tory was the subject of dispute, a Whig was always of opinion that gross bribery and corruption had prevailed. It was an exquisitely simple manner of proceeding; Justice, open-eyed, held the scales, and a majority of votes decided the inclination of the balance. Truth, right, honour, were not amongst the weights; but, in their stead, party, office, spite served as their substitutes. As Walpole pithily put it, it was not a question of honesty or dishonesty, but a question between Pulteney and himself. If you were on the side of the Opposition, you recorded your vote against every Ministerialist whose election was

disputed. If, on the other hand, you were a follower of the minister in power, you objected to the election of every member of the Opposition. The method appealed to the feeblest capacity.

Of the different elections that now came before the House for settlement, none excited more interest and partisanship than that of Westminster. Walpole was most anxious to carry the day, and employed all his wiles to obtain a majority, but the Fates were against him. On a division the election was declared invalid by a majority of four, and a vote of censure passed upon the High Bailiff. The candidates of the Government dared not again appear at the hustings, and two "patriots" were returned to swell the ranks of the Opposition. And now, after this decided expression of opinion, Walpole was strongly urged to send in his resignation to the King. His friends, personal and political, rallied round him and were eloquent on the theme. The Opposition were too formidable to justify resistance. His colleagues in the Cabinet were intriguing to supplant him. Wilmington was plotting with Dodington; Newcastle and Hardwicke were the friends of Carteret; and Hervey, the Lord Privy Seal, was in constant communication with Chesterfield and Pulteney. His health was failing; he was losing that perfect command over his temper. The voice of the country was against him. It was better to retire voluntarily than to be forced to resign. He could now withdraw with safety, but how could he tell whether in a few weeks, what with an irritated nation, a vehement Opposition, and the Jacobites deceived and vindictive, people might not be clamouring for his blood.

Yet the minister was deaf to counsel and entreaties. As long as there was a plank to give him foothold he

would not quit the ship. The clouds looked black and lowering, the waves were raging furiously, still the storm might be weathered. He had known of tempests equally boisterous, yet the haven had been reached in safety. It was true that the Opposition had increased its numbers, and now presented a most formidable front, but there were too many secret jealousies in their midst for them to keep long united. Their divisions and hatreds were his strength. It was true that the feeling of the country was now not in his favour, but what statesman attached any real value to popularity? The applause of the mob was as fickle as the wind; he was unpopular now, but the slightest favour from Fortune—a victory, a diplomatic success, a political false move on the part of his foes—and he would be again popular. His colleagues were traitors, but they were playing with men masters in duplicity, and might be outwitted. As for his health, all he required was rest. For twenty years he had been at the helm of Government, and now at the first signs of resistance he had no intention of playing the coward's part and beating a retreat.* Thus he argued, and declined to be advised. "It is generally agreed," writes Sir Robert Wilmot to the Duke of Devonshire, "that Sir Robert will never give up, nor bring any body in if he can possibly avoid it; and that his Majesty will never forsake him."*

Resolved to maintain himself in power, Walpole now entered upon a course which to most men will appear incomprehensible. He determined to make a bid for the support of the Prince of Wales. Being told that the Opposition intended to renew their request for an increase in the establishment of the Prince, Walpole sought an

* "Devonshire Papers," Jan. 12, 1741-2. Coxe.

interview with the King, and prevailed upon his Majesty to offer the Prince an additional fifty thousand a year, provided that he withdrew his countenance from the Opposition. At the instance of Lord Cholmondeley, and by command of the King, the Bishop of Oxford called upon the Prince and proposed the bargain. The answer of his Royal Highness was short and direct. He would hearken to no such proposition so long as Sir Robert Walpole, by whom he conceived himself to have been greatly injured, remained at the head of affairs. How was it possible that Walpole could have expected any other answer? The very fact of his making such an offer was a lamentable exhibition of the weakness of his position which no sound tactician would have indulged in. He must have known that his enemies would regard such a proposal, not as an offer inspired by generosity, but as terms prompted by expediency. It was one of those stupid mistakes from which mediocrity is always free, but which genius, from some peculiarity in its constitution, occasionally commits. The result of this injudicious step was to add another triumph to the already long list of Opposition victories, and to have it circulated that the only obstacle to a full and complete reconciliation between the King and the Prince of Wales was the maintenance of Sir Robert Walpole in power.

And now the day had arrived when Pulteney was to make his celebrated motion, of which he had given notice, for referring to a Select Committee the papers which had been laid before the House relating to the war. Before one of the most crowded Houses of the session, the leader of the Opposition delivered himself of a studied attack upon Walpole. All the old charges that Sandys had marshalled together in his exhaustive speech were

again recapitulated, but envenomed by an invective of which Sandys was not capable. The now familiar allusions to the pusillanimity of the minister, his organized corruption, his betrayal of English interests, and the selfish and interested principles of his policy, received their wonted cheers and counter-cheers. Pitt followed in the same style as his chief—bitter, vindictive, and inconsistent. It was pretended that the motion was not directed against any person in particular, but moved simply to assist the King with advice. Yet when Lord Percival, the new member for Westminster, addressed the Chamber, he innocently revealed the real object of his friends, for he said that he should vote for the motion as a Committee of Accusation. This ingenuous remark was not lost upon so keen a parliamentary debater as Walpole. He rose up at once to meet the charges of his opponents. Unfortunately no record remains of the reply he made on that occasion, and we have to content ourselves with the meagre comments upon it from a contemporary.

We are told that "Sir Robert exceeded himself: he particularly entered into foreign affairs and convinced even his enemies that he was thoroughly master of them;" that "Mr. Pelham, with the greatest decency, cut Pulteney into a thousand pieces," and that "Sir Robert actually dissected him and laid his heart open to the view of the House."* Still the motion of Pulteney was only rejected by the narrow majority of three. Every effort had been made by the Opposition to secure the attendance of their members. The occasion was so important that physical infirmity had not been accepted as an excuse. "The Opposition were collected to a man," writes Sir Robert

* Sir R. Wilmot to the Duke of Devonshire, Jan. 23, 1741-2. Coxe.

Wilmot,* "but I believe not above one-and-twenty knew for what. Sir William Gordon was brought in like a corpse. Some thought it had been an old woman in disguise, having a white cloth round his head; others, who found him out, expected him to expire every moment. Other incurables were introduced on their side. Mr. Hopton, for Hereford, was carried in with crutches. There was one and one in the same condition on the Court side."

The Prince of Wales happened to be in the House watching the curious scene—more like the Pool of Bethesda than a legislative assembly. "So I see," he said to General Churchill, pointing to a legless member being carried to his seat, "so I see you bring in the lame, the halt, and the blind." "Yes," replied the General, laughing, "the lame on our side, the blind on yours."

Walpole, on the other hand, had been most careless in rallying his supporters round him. Some had gone away on leave; others sat at the coffee-houses and were not to be disturbed; a few absented themselves purposely in order not to be called upon to vote; whilst several who were sitting in Lord Walpole's room, which communicated with the House, awaiting the division, found they could not get out in time, the keyhole having been filled with dust and dirt by some of Pulteney's disciples, so that the door would not open.

It was now evident that the only course open for the minister was to resign. His once powerful majority had dwindled down to three, and in a few days, when the question of the Chippenham Election Petition came before the House, even that feeble majority could not be commanded, and Walpole found himself for the first time for twenty

* Sir R. Wilmot to the Duke of Devonshire, Jan. 23, 1741-2. Coxe.

years in a minority. He was strongly advised to give up the Seals. "I must inform you," he writes to the Duke of Devonshire,* "that the panic was so great among what I should call my own friends that *they all declared my retiring was become absolutely necessary, as the only means to carry on the public business.*" His own family also urged him to submit to the verdict of parliamentary fortune, and not to oppose a hostile House of Commons. Had he consulted his own wishes, he would, he said, still have remained at the head of affairs, in spite of his political reverses; but when he found that, in addition to a formidable majority in the House of Commons, and to a strong feeling against him out-of-doors, his Cabinet declined to serve under him, and threatened desertion, he saw that there was no alternative but to tender his resignation. On handing the Seals to the King the minister knelt down to kiss the royal hand, and it is said that his Majesty was so moved at the departure of his chief adviser, after the many years of faithful service he had rendered the Crown, that he burst into tears. Walpole was raised to the Upper House by the title of the Earl of Orford, and a handsome pension granted him.

Thus the minister, whose clear brain and sound judgment had guided the interests of England during the last twenty years, had been overthrown, and the victory remained with his enemies. One question was now on every lip: Who was to succeed him? The quidnuncs wandered from coffee-house to coffee-house in quest of information, and imparted to eager and credulous hearers the snatches of gossip they had gathered in the ante-rooms of Whitehall. Every hour a new Cabinet was formed. Wilmington had

* "Devonshire Papers," Feb. 2, 1742. Coxe.

been offered the Treasury; the King had sent for Pulteney; the Pelhams had been asked to constitute a Ministry; the extreme Tories were to be excluded from office; Walpole was to be sent to the Tower; the reconciliation between the King and the Prince of Wales was a hollow affair, and none of the Prince's friends would be allowed to hold office; Argyle was to be the new Secretary for Scotland; Chesterfield was to be one of the Secretaries of State; Carteret had declined to serve under Pulteney; would Pitt be offered office? At Wills', at Jonathan's, and at Garraway's the conversation was entirely engrossed by political matters, and the changes that were to follow upon the resignation of Walpole.

Whilst the air was thus heavy with rumours and reports, the ex-minister had been busy with his preparations for the future. Shortly after having tendered his resignation Walpole repaired to the Palace, and was closeted with the King. He advised his Majesty to send for Pulteney as the most fitting member of the Opposition to form a Ministry. This apparently generous recommendation of a rival was, however, hampered with the condition that, if Pulteney should accept the Treasury, he was to promise that no hurt should befall Walpole. A proud and high-minded man would have scorned to lower himself by making such a proposal. He would have recommended as his successor one to whom he knew the interests of the country might safely be intrusted, and have left his own future entirely out of the question. Conscious of his integrity and of the purity of his past conduct, he would never have given a thought at such a moment to his own personal safety. He had fought and been defeated—let the victors do with him what they willed; he would not fetter the King with any

selfish restrictions; the welfare of his country, not the security of himself, should be his only motive in specially recommending his successor.

But these patriotic sentiments were not entertained by the fallen Walpole; he had been overthrown, and his aim was now, not the good of his country, but honour and safety to himself, and a paving of the way which would restore him to power. He had accepted a peerage; a handsome pension had been granted him. His illegitimate child had obtained a patent of precedence as an Earl's daughter. He knew that there were many thirsting after his blood, and the safety of his head was now his chief consideration. The King disliked Pulteney. Pulteney, though he had declared he would never hold office, was fond of power, and might be open to persuasion. To reconcile the King to Pulteney, and to establish Pulteney at the Treasury, on the understanding that no prosecution should ensue, were now the two objects of Walpole. By this arrangement three great ends would be attained. The first, and in the eyes of the late minister the most important, was that all the terrors of an impeachment would be avoided. The second was that the appointment of Pulteney would establish an administration on a Whig basis. And the third was that the selection of Pulteney would create the greatest jealousy among the members of the late Opposition, would divide the party, and in the end lead to the return of Walpole.

After some hesitation the King agreed to accept the nomination of Walpole on the conditions proposed. The Duke of Newcastle was desired to call upon Pulteney, and to deliver the royal message. Accompanied by Hardwicke, the Duke visited the leader of the Opposition. His Grace

said that, as the King was now convinced that the House of Commons had withdrawn its support from Sir Robert Walpole, he had been commanded by his Majesty to offer the places lately held by that minister to Mr. Pulteney, with the power of forming his own administration; to this arrangement there was but one stipulation, that Sir Robert Walpole should not be prosecuted.

Pulteney replied that, if such a condition was to be made the foundation of the treaty, he never would comply with it; "and even," he said, "should my inclination induce me to accede to these terms, yet it might not be in my power to fulfil my engagement; the heads of parties being like the heads of snakes, which are carried on by their tails. For my part," he added, "I will be no screen; but if the King should be pleased to express a desire to open any treaty, or to hold any conversation with me, I will pay my duty at St. James's, though I have not been at Court for many years; but I will not come privately, but publicly, and at noonday, in order to prevent all jealousy and suspicion." Before parting some negus was brought in, and Newcastle, filling his tumbler, drank, "Here is to our happier meeting." Pulteney replied, in a quotation from Julius Cæsar,

> "If we do meet again, why we shall smile;
> If not, why then this meeting was well made."

Soon after the failure of this interview the King sent Pulteney a private message, requesting that, if he did not choose to take the Treasury, he would let Lord Wilmington *slide* into it, to which Pulteney agreed. Carteret, who had desired that post, expressed dissatisfaction at this arrangement, when Pulteney declared that he would break

his own resolution, and take the place himself, if any opposition was made to the appointment of Wilmington. "You," he said, consolingly, to Carteret, "must be Secretary of State, as the fittest person to direct foreign affairs."

In the course of a few days another conference took place. Newcastle said that he was now commissioned by the King to make the former offers, without insisting on the condition of not prosecuting the late minister. The King only requested that, if any prosecution was commenced against Sir Robert Walpole, Pulteney would not inflame it, though he might not choose to oppose it. Pulteney replied that he was not *a man of blood;* that in all his expressions importing a resolution to pursue the minister to destruction he meant only the destruction of his power, but not of his person. He could not undertake to say what was proper to be done; he must take the advice of his friends; though he was free to own that, according to his opinion, some parliamentary censure at least should be inflicted for so many years of maladministration. Newcastle then observed, "The King trusts you will not distress the Government by making too many changes in the midst of a session of Parliament, and that you and your friends will be satisfied with the removal of Sir Robert Walpole and a few others." Pulteney replied that he had no wish to perplex Government, or to make such changes at once as would throw all things into confusion; he did not insist on a total change; he had no objection to the Duke of Newcastle or the Lord Chancellor, but what he insisted upon was an alteration of measures as well as men. He required that certain obnoxious persons should be dismissed; that the main forts of government should be delivered into the hands of his

party—a majority in the Cabinet Council, the nomination of a Secretary of State for Scotland, and of the Boards of Treasury and Admiralty.

After some discussion these points were agreed to. Newcastle then said that, in arranging the new administration, he supposed Pulteney would place himself at the head of the Treasury, and declared that such appointment was the earnest and repeated desire of the King. "As the disposition of places is in my hands," replied Pulteney, "I will accept none myself; I have so repeatedly declared my resolution on that head, and I will not now contradict myself." He then appointed the Earl of Wilmington First Lord of the Treasury; Sandys Chancellor of the Exchequer; Carteret Secretary of State; Sir John Rushout, Gibbon, and Waller Lords of the Treasury; a new Board of Admiralty, including Sir John Hynde Cotton; and the Marquis of Tweeddale Secretary of State for Scotland. For himself he demanded only a peerage, and a seat in the Cabinet." *

Whilst these proceedings were pending, a reconciliation —cold, but not unsatisfactory—took place between the Court and the Prince of Wales. The long wished-for addition of fifty thousand a year was granted his Royal Highness, and two of his adherents—Lord Baltimore and Lord Archibald Hamilton—were appointed members of the new Board of Admiralty. At the same time Walpole had an interview with the Prince, when he was assured that, should he be attacked, he might rely upon the protection of his Royal Highness. "I am sure your Grace will be very glad to hear," writes Sir Robert Wilmot to the Duke of Devonshire,† "that Sir Robert Walpole has received

* Coxe. † "Devonshire Papers," Feb. 6, 1742. Coxe.

the strongest assurances from the Prince of Wales (whom he has been privately with), and others, that he shall not be molested in any shape, or upon any account. That his Majesty hath done something or other, I don't know what, in a most affectionate and generous manner for him; and that Sir Robert has really declared upon his honour, to some of his particular friends, he is, in every respect relating to himself, perfectly satisfied and happy."

Nor had Walpole scant grounds for being "perfectly satisfied and happy." His safety was assured. Though Pulteney had refused the Treasury, yet, in the hands of Wilmington, the administration was established on a Whig basis. The most bitter animosities, as he had anticipated, were disintegrating the ranks of the Opposition. To overthrow a Ministry is not always a matter of much difficulty; to construct a Cabinet which will satisfy and not disappoint the ambitious is a harder task. To criticize and condemn a policy is always easy; to draw up a new programme which will command support is a work that has often baffled genius. On this occasion, both with their measures and their men, the quondam Opposition were grievously disappointed. The foes of Walpole wished to restore the country to good humour by the introduction of a new policy. But what was to be the new policy? Some were in favour of annual Parliaments; others for triennial Parliaments. Several were anxious for a reduction of the Civil List; whilst a goodly number opposed such reduction, on the ground that what had been legally granted could not justly be taken away. Some voted for the sale of all appointments in the State; others that only a few should be put up to auction. Many were in favour of a

good Place Bill, but all differed as to the degree and extent of the bill. Several voted for a Pension Bill; whilst those who opposed it said that such a bill would signify nothing. Not a measure was introduced but gave rise to dispute, opposition, and bitter cavilling.

But it was in Pulteney's arrangement of the Cabinet that the keenest jealousies were aroused. Men who had expected office were disappointed at their exclusion; men who were indifferent to office were angered at seeing those they considered incompetent placed in high positions; men who had worked for their party were loud in their complaints at their services not being acknowledged and rewarded. What Walpole had prophesied had come to pass. The disaffected Whigs were appeased by the fruits of office, whilst the Tories and the Jacobites were in a fury at having been passed over. Murmurs and objections broke out on all sides. The whole party was summoned to a meeting which was to be held at the Fountain Tavern, in the Strand. With the exception of Carteret, who said that he never dined at a tavern, nearly all the members of the late Opposition attended. It was estimated that some three hundred peers and commoners were present.

The chief spokesman on this occasion was the Duke of Argyle, who was bitterly disappointed at Tweeddale having been preferred before him for the Secretaryship of Scotland. He expatiated with great solemnity upon the dangerous situation to which the country had been reduced by the Walpole administration, and upon the glorious and steady opposition which had been made to the late minister. Then, after observing, in sarcastic allusion to Pulteney, that a grain of honesty was worth a

cartload of gold, he continued: "But have we not much reason to fear that a proper use will not be made of the happy opportunity; that a few men, without any communication of their proceedings to this assembly, have arrogated to themselves the exclusive right of nomination, and from their manner we have sufficient cause to apprehend that they do not intend the general advantage. They have now been eight days engaged in this business, and if we are to judge from the few offices they have already bestowed, they may justly be accused of not acting with that vigour which the whole people have a right to expect. The choice of those already preferred cannot but supply great matter of jealousy; for as this choice has principally fallen upon the Whigs, it is an ill omen to the Tories. If they are not to be provided for, the happy effects of the coalition will be destroyed; and the odious distinction of party will be again revived, to the great prejudice of the nation. It is therefore highly necessary to continue closely united, and to persevere with the same vehemence as ever, till the Tories obtain justice, and the administration is founded upon the *broad bottom* of both parties." *

To these strictures Pulteney replied with no less bitterness. He lamented the treatment which he and his colleagues had received in return for their services, by being thus publicly charged, in the face of the world, with things of which no man dared venture to accuse them in private. "We deserve," he said passionately, "a very different usage for the integrity with which we

* "One now hears of nothing," writes Horace Walpole to his friend Mann, "but the *broad bottom;* it is the reigning cant word, and means the taking all parties and [illegible] indifferently into the Ministry."

have hitherto proceeded, and by which we are determined to proceed. In answer to the imputation that we have taken the management of the negotiation into our hands, let us reply that, overtures having been made to us, it was our duty (as it would have been the duty of every man to whom such overtures had been made) to employ all our abilities and endeavours to form a happy settlement, after the divisions with which this country has been so long unhappily rent, and which could not longer subsist without ruining the interest of the nation abroad, and incurring the danger of fatal disturbances at home. The superficial vulgar might indeed conceive that it would have been more equitable to refer the settlement to the decision of the whole party, but surely no man of tolerable understanding and experience can cherish an idea so impracticable and absurd. . . .

"As to the distribution of employments, there is neither justice, decency, duty, nor moderation in dictating to the King how to dispose of every preferment in the State. His Majesty has shown a disposition to comply with the desires of his people in the most effectual manner; he has already supplied the principal Ministerial posts with men who have hitherto enjoyed the confidence of the people, and cannot yet have forfeited their good opinion, because, though nominated, they have none of them yet done any single act of office. As to the changes already made, they are as numerous as the importance of the matter and the nature of the thing can possibly admit so soon, and it would have been more to the credit of the party if their patience had extended a little longer than the few days that have passed since the time of their adjournment. As to the partial distribution of employments to the Whigs,

as far as our interest shall hereafter extend, we will use it faithfully to the King and our country, by recommending such persons whose principles have been misrepresented, and who are true to his family, let their appellations be what they will. But it must be a work of some time to remove suspicions inculcated long, and long credited, with regard to a denomination of men who have formerly been thought not heartily attached to the interest of the Prince upon the throne; some instances of this intention have been already given in the late removals, and there will be many more, but it must depend upon the prudent conduct of the Tories themselves wholly to abolish these unhappy distinctions of party."

He then ended by begging them to consider how false was the step they had already taken, and that these divisions would only inspire the party they had just subdued with new courage. His advice, however, fell on unwilling ears. The meeting broke up amid much dissatisfaction and loud signs of disapproval.*

Several appointments had still to be filled up, and after a second conference between the late Opposition leaders the remaining posts were assigned. Argyle became Master of the Ordnance, with a seat in the Cabinet; Carteret succeeded Harrington as Secretary of State; Yonge was allowed to continue as Secretary at War, and Pelham as Paymaster of the Forces. The Board of Admiralty was the only department the officials of which were not yet decided upon. The Duke of Argyle had been most pressing in his efforts to recommend Sir John Hynde Cotton, a notorious Jacobite, as one of the Lords, and had been assured that his wishes should be gratified.

* "Faction Detected." A Pamphlet, by Lord Percival. Coxe.

Loud then was his indignation when the constitution of the new Board was announced, and the name of Cotton excluded. In vain the Duke remonstrated both with Pulteney and Wilmington. He was informed that the King declined to nominate Cotton, and that his Majesty was resolved only to stand by those who had supported his dynasty. This declaration excited the warmest disapproval. The Tories felt, so far as they were concerned, that the fall of Walpole had not benefited them in the least; that they had simply exchanged one Whig Cabinet for another Whig Cabinet, and, angry, mortified, and chagrined, they began to relapse into their former attitude of opposition. The refusal to accept Cotton was the signal for the Jacobites to withdraw their allegiance from Wilmington. The Duke of Argyle, irritated at his recommendation having been slighted, and still more irritated that the government of Scotland had not been intrusted to his hands, resigned his seat in the Cabinet, and went into open opposition.

Thus the designs of Walpole had been crowned with a success which even he could hardly have anticipated. A new administration had been formed on a purely Whig basis. Those who had been his political foes were completely disorganized, and were now more divided into hostile sections than they had ever been when he was in power. It was but a change of men, not of measures. Wilmington had succeeded to Walpole; Argyle was now the leader of the Opposition instead of Pulteney; and the Opposition was still composed of Whigs who had been disappointed in not holding office, of Tories whom the King distrusted, and of Jacobites intriguing for the Pretender. Pulteney, by declining the Treasury and accepting

a peerage, had made himself extremely unpopular, and was no longer a rival to be feared. "The King hated him," wrote Chesterfield, "almost as much for what he might have done as for what he had done; the nation looked upon him as a deserter; and he shrunk into insignificance and an Earldom."

Ever since he had led the Opposition it had been the boast of Pulteney that he was above the vulgar ambition of office, the vulgar greed for money. He had displayed his consistency. He had been offered office; he could have been installed as head of the Treasury; and he had shown that he was indifferent to power and could not be bought. But it was asked why did he accept a peerage? If he was above power he should also have been above the rewards that power obtains. Yet for his Earldom Pulteney had but to thank his old enemy. Walpole had prompted the King to offer the leader of the Opposition a coronet, and Pulteney had succumbed to the proposal. Soon after his refusal of office, however, he wished to decline the honour, but Walpole, well aware how public opinion would view the matter, advised the King to insist upon its original acceptance. "I remember," writes Horace Walpole, "my father's action and words when he returned from Court and told me what he had done—'I have turned the key of the closet on him!' making that motion with his hand." It is said that when Pulteney received the patent of his creation as Earl of Bath he flung the parchment down and trampled upon it.

"Great Earl of Bath, your reign is o'er;
The Tories trust your word no more,
The Whigs no longer fear ye;
Your gates are seldom now unbarr'd,
No crowds of coaches fill your yard,
And scarce a soul comes near ye.

"Few now aspire at your good graces,
Scarce any sue to you for places,
Or come with their petition,
To tell how well they have deserved,
How long, how steadily they starved
For you in Opposition;

"Expect to see that tribe no more,
Since all mankind perceive that power
Is lodged in other hands.
Sooner to Carteret now they'll go,
Or even (though that's excessive low)
To Wilmington and Sands."

Though hurled from power, Walpole had little reason to envy the triumph of his enemies. He saw a Whig Ministry pursuing the very policy he himself had inculcated. He saw those who had opposed his Government shattered, disappointed, and still as far from their goal as ever. He saw his rival, who had been the chief foe of his administration, and whom the public voice had always named as his successor, hated, execrated, and despised. Never had a minister's overthrow been less complete; never had malice been less victorious.

One anxiety alone disturbed him—he was still in fear of a prosecution. Both the King and the Prince of Wales had promised to protect him. In the House of Lords he had a stanch and numerous body of supporters. There were many in the Lower House who, out of gratitude, and for the sake of old associations, would decline to take part in any systematic attack upon his life or reputation. Still a formidable party thirsted for revenge. The Whigs who had succeeded him, and who had found no better course than to adopt his policy, required a scapegoat. The Tories who had battled for his overthrow, and who had been bitterly disappointed as to the results of their victory, were eager to wreak their vengeance upon the man who

had foiled their schemes when in power, and who in the hour of defeat had still been their successful foe. The Jacobites hated him with the intensity of deception that has been outwitted, and loudly declared for the Tower and the headsman's office. A large portion of the country, which belonged to no distinct political party, but which attributed to "the maladministration of Walpole" the depression of trade, the harvest failures, and the increase of taxation, ranked itself on the side of his enemies, and gave its voice in favour of punishment.

Nor was it long before this almost unanimous hostility assumed a definite shape. One Fazakerley, a member of the House of Commons, and a most violent Tory, had been commissioned to draw up articles of impeachment against Walpole, but the charges framed by him not meeting with general approval, Lord Limerick, early in March, moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the administration of Sir Robert Walpole during the last twenty years. Pulteney, owing to the illness of his daughter, was unable to be present on the occasion, but he wrote to several of his friends that he was not in favour of the motion, and, thanks to his opposition, when the question was put, it was negatived by a majority of two.

"The motion for a Committee of Inquiry is over," writes John Orlebar, gleefully, to Henry Etough,* "carried against it 244 to 242. I wish you joy of it. . . . . The motion was for appointing a Committee to inquire into the conduct of our Affairs at home and abroad for twenty years last past; it was made by Lord Limerick, and seconded by Sir John St. Albin: Pitt, Lyttleton, Sir John Cotton, and Phillips were the chief who spoke for it.

* "Etough Papers," March 11, 1742. Coxe.

Mr. Pelham, Sir William Yonge, Wynnington, the Attorney-General, Mr. Coke, and Lord Hartington against it. The two last spoke very prettily; the Attorney and Sir William, very well; Wynnington, never better or so well. 'Twas in general a decent, orderly debate. Sir John Barnard did not speak, nor any of the new Lords of the Treasury; but they divided for the question. Sir John St. Albin was shut out on the division, and there were a matter of fourteen retired into the Speaker's chamber. Not a friend of Lord Orford's deserted him, except Jemmy Lumley: Lord Baltimore was either absent or voted against the question; the rest of the Prince's servants were for it. Never was a greater disappointment. Those who proved the minority were so confident of being the majority that the great Mr. Dodington harangued in the lobby those who went out at the division, to desire them not to go away, because there were several other motions to be made in consequence of that, and likewise to bespeak their attendance at the Fountain to-night, in order to settle the Committee."

But Mr. Orlebar's conclusions were somewhat premature. As soon as it became known that Pulteney had advised those who acted with him not to vote for the motion, he was assailed by the bitterest and most unsparing abuse. It was even said that he had bought his peerage at the price of screening the minister from public vengeance. So keenly did he feel these unmerited strictures that he begged Lord Limerick to renew his motion. The rules of Parliament, however, not permitting a motion once rejected to be brought forward again in the same session, it was necessary to alter the wording so as to enable Lord Limerick to repeat his request. Instead, therefore,

of demanding that the inquiry should extend over twenty years, the motion was now limited to the last ten years of the Walpole administration. The proposal was brought forward on the 23rd of March. Pulteney spoke in its favour, adding, however, that he hoped no rancour would be exhibited in the inquiry, and begging not to be put on the committee. Horace Walpole, the author of the famous "Letters," rose up in his father's defence, and was hotly answered by Pitt, who remarked that if it was becoming in the honourable gentleman to remember that he was the child of the accused, the House ought also to remember that it was the child of the country. On dividing, the proposal was carried by a majority of seven.*

The motion having passed, the next step was to appoint the committee. After some little time spent in selection, the names were announced, when it was found, to the dismay of the partisans of Walpole, that out of a jury of twenty-one only two persons could be pointed out as the decided friends of the fallen minister. And of these two Sir Robert observed, "They will become so zealous for the honour of this committee that they will no longer pay regard to mine."

The enemies of Walpole were in the highest spirits. At last they had their foe within their merciless clutch, and they vowed he should not escape them. It was confidently expected that the moment the committee entered upon its labours the grossest frauds and the most nefarious corruption would be at once discovered. "I fear not to declare," said Pitt, who was on the committee, "that I expect, in consequence of such inquiry, to find that our treasure has been exhausted, not to humble our

* Stanhope's "History of England," vol. ii. p. 181.

enemies, or to obviate domestic insurrections, not to support our allies, or to suppress our factions; but for purposes which no man who loves his country can think of without indignation, the purchase of votes, the bribing of boroughs, the enriching of hirelings, the multiplying of dependants, and the corruption of parliaments." *

Lord Limerick was chosen Chairman, and without delay the packed jury proceeded upon its prejudiced work. The Treasury books were rigidly overhauled, official papers keenly looked through, and witnesses most rigorously examined. Yet with what result? It was found that this minister, who had been accused of so freely pillaging from the State for his own evil ends, and whose administration had been steeped in bribery and corruption, had been guilty of the heinous offence of offering the Mayor of Weymouth the post of collector of that port provided he would, during the election, obtain the nomination of a returning officer; that a few Revenue officials who had refused to vote for the Government candidate had been dismissed; that a certain contract had been entered into by which the contractors had gained fourteen per cent.; and that there had been some profusion in the expenditure of the Secret Service money. The mountain had at last been delivered, and this most ridiculous mouse was the fruit of its travail!

Ever since the accession of George the Second the leaders of the Opposition, the venal hacks of the press, and the men who made political agitation their trade, had been vehement in their denunciations of the organized corruption of Sir Robert Walpole. He had exercised undue influence at elections! He had been a party to the drawing up of fraudulent agreements! He had tampered with the funds

* "Chandler's Debates." Coxe.

belonging to the Secret Service! And now, after a long and vigilant investigation, conducted by a 'packed and prejudiced jury, it was discovered that these grave and sweeping charges resolved themselves into an attempt upon the political virtue of the mayor of a small borough, the dismissal of a few Civil Service subordinates, the entering into *one* contract that was disapproved of, and certain vague accusations respecting the Secret Service money. The monster of corruption had been carefully examined, and, instead of a body scored by disease and debilitated by vice, it was found that the limbs were firm and powerful, the vital parts sound and healthy, but a few blemishes were observed on the skin.

Let us briefly remark upon the accusations contained in the Report of this Select Committee; for, trifling and unimportant as they are, considering the enormities that were expected to be brought to the light, they are yet capable of palliation and explanation. With regard to the conduct of Walpole towards the Mayor of Weymouth and the officials of the Inland Revenue, the minister must, we fear, plead guilty. It is not a very grave indictment when we consider the behaviour of Walpole's predecessors under the same circumstances, and the loose manner in which the details of parliamentary government were then carried on. The second charge, of granting fraudulent contracts, is reduced to one single instance. It appears that Walpole had entered into a contract with two members of the House of Commons—Messrs. Burrel and Bristow—for furnishing money at Jamaica towards the payment of the British troops, by which the contractors gained fourteen per cent. "But even admitting the truth of the statement," says Coxe, who has made an exhaustive if somewhat partial

commentary upon this Report, "the bargain when first made could not be unfavourable to the public, because, as appears upon the Report, Burrel would not, on account of the risk, accept the whole contract, but admitted Bristow as his partner, and even offered a part of his share to his brothers and two other gentlemen; all of whom declined for the same reason." High interest means bad security, and when business men enter into a contract the operations of which are hazardous and the gains doubtful, it should be expected that the profits, if profits there be, should be unusually large.

The charge of peculation and of squandering public money is really the only serious accusation brought by the Select Committee against Walpole. But here the statements are so garbled, and so leavened with malice, as greatly to detract from their value. It was the object of the committee to show that during the years 1731—41 the sums expended in Secret Services had been greater than the sums expended during any ten years in any of the preceding reigns. Accordingly, with the most culpable partiality, they accepted as their standard of comparison a period of ten years when domestic and foreign politics had been favourable to economy, and the public expenditure had been low. They selected the decade from 1707 to 1717. Had they chosen the ten first years of the reign of Queen Anne, or the ten first years of George I., they would have found little difference between the money spent by Walpole from 1731 to 1741 and the expenditure of 1702 to 1712, or that of 1714 to 1724. But this sense of fairness did not animate the committee. The years between 1707 and 1717 were fixed upon. During these ten years the committee stated that no more

than the sum of £337,960 had been expended, whilst between the years 1731 and 1741 there had been applied for Secret and Special Services no less a total than £1,440,128.

The difference between the two amounts is certainly striking, but, unfortunately for the committee, in trying to prove too much they lamentably exposed their own dishonesty. In the first place, between the years 1707 and 1717 far more was expended upon secret and special services than £337,960. To suit their own purposes the committee overlooked large sums granted for procuring secret intelligence, the deductions from the pay of all the foreign forces in the service of Great Britain, and certain important items forming part of the Civil List Debt which would have inconveniently swelled their statement of expenditure. In the next place, the amount which Walpole is credited with having spent during the last ten years of his administration includes various large sums which should not be classed under the head of Secret Service. The object of the committee was to make it appear that the money expended by Walpole for the secret purposes of Government, the money spent in special services, and the money spent in reimbursements and official salaries, were all one and the same thing—all expended in the corruption of the individual at the expense of the State.

But when we deduct from this one million and odd hundred thousand pounds, laid out by Walpole during his last ten years of office, the sums spent in pensions, the salaries allowed to officials, the amounts paid to spies and agents at foreign courts, and such other sundries, all of which were included under the one simple but

elastic heading of Secret and Special Services, it will be found that the much-maligned minister expended less than £80,000 a year upon his secret service disbursements; "and," says Coxe, "if due consideration be had to the difference of times of war and peace, to the increase in the value of money, and to the difficulty of procuring exact intelligence, this sum will not appear comparatively larger than the Secret Service money expended in the reigns of William, Anne, and George I."

That Walpole had been guilty of bribery and corruption, that he had paid for votes in the House of Commons with the guineas of the Treasury, that he had supported certain newspapers with public money, and that he occasionally drew upon the funds of the Secret Service to reward his partisans, cannot be denied; but that he was the incarnation of fraud and dishonesty that malignity represented him is obviously untrue. If Walpole had been the wholesale poisoner of parliamentary purity his opponents alleged, it seems strange that a hostile committee, with the fullest powers of investigation, should have failed to discover all traces of his nefarious proceedings. When our enemies acquit us we must indeed be blameless. We are not surprised, therefore, to hear that when the report of the committee, from which so much scandal had been anticipated, made its appearance, it was received by the public with contempt.

With the failure of this inquiry the political career of Walpole draws to an end. Save when, in moments of emergency, he was consulted by his sovereign, he passed his declining years at Houghton, superintending the alterations he was making at his splendid country seat, and fitting up his magnificent picture gallery. Though fallen

from power he was still the confidential adviser of the King, and his words carried a weight such as no minister in the Cabinet possessed. When Wilmington was at death's door it was Walpole who recommended that Pelham should be sent for, to the exclusion of the Earl of Bath; and much to the surprise of the admirers of Pulteney, the *Gazette* announced that his Majesty had been pleased to appoint Mr. Pelham First Lord of the Treasury. When war broke out between England and France, when the young Pretender was expected to land upon our shores, and when the Cabinet was torn by the dissensions between Carteret and Newcastle, it was Walpole whom the King desired to hasten to London, and to give him the benefit of his counsels.

"I had, this morning, the honour of attending his Majesty in his Closet," writes Lord Cholmondeley to the ex-minister,* "being called for by the Lord of the Bedchamber by his Majesty's command; when he was pleased, after many gracious expressions in your favour, and speaking of your service in the strongest terms, to command me to inform you that it would be highly agreeable to him your coming to town a week or ten days before the meeting of Parliament. He further added, that the experience he had for so many years received of your Lordship's zeal for his service, your consummate judgment in the interior and domestic affairs of this kingdom, were so many motives to desire your attendance when England was under the necessity of taking upon herself so large a share in the conduct and support of the common cause, in the present dangerous and disturbed situation of Europe; knowing of what real weight your

* "Walpole Papers," November 5, 1744. Coxe.

opinion and influence must be with numbers in both Houses of Parliament, when such nice and important points must come before them for their deliberation and advice."

Walpole hastened to obey the royal summons. It was his last interview with his Master. He had long been suffering from a most acute malady, and the four days he occupied in travelling from Houghton had greatly aggravated his complaint. Shortly after arriving in London he was compelled to take to his bed. His surgeon, Ranby, who had always attended him, was sent for. The struggle of death for the mastery was terrible. "When I recollect his resigned behaviour," writes the surgeon, who published a narrative of Walpole's last illness, "under the most excruciating pains, the magnanimous sentiments which filled his soul, when on the eve, seemingly, of dissolution, and call to mind the exalted expressions that were continually flowing from him at this severe time of trial; however extraordinary his natural talents or acquired abilities were; however he had distinguished himself by his eloquence in the senate, or by his singular judgment and depth of penetration in counsels; this incomparable constancy and astonishing presence of mind must raise in my opinion as sublime ideas of him as any act of his life besides, however good and popular; and reflect a renown on his name equal to that which consecrates the memory of the remarkable sages of antiquity."

Walpole died on the 18th of March, 1745, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. He lies buried within the parish church of Houghton, and neither monument nor inscription record the spot where his remains have been interred.

"So peaceful rest, without a stone, a name,
Which once had 'honours, titles, wealth, and fame.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

HIS CHARACTER.

Of all the statesmen who have held high office, it would be impossible to find one who has been more systematically abused and more unjustly treated than Sir Robert Walpole. Whenever his name is mentioned by history, his character is described in the harshest and most vindictive terms. He is the "Father of Parliamentary Corruption," the "foe to English liberty," the "man who maintained his power by the basest and most venal tactics," the author of the saying that "every man has his price." Whenever his administration is alluded to in Parliament a shudder runs through the House—especially amongst men who regard politics as a profession and not as a creed—at the very thought that one so sordid, so interested, so schemingly selfish, should have attained to the position of Prime Minister, and have commanded a following. If we read the pamphlet literature of the eighteenth century, we see Walpole represented as the meanest and most corrupt of mankind—the tool of the King, a political gladiator, a man destitute of real ability, and utterly devoid of those gifts and sentiments which elevate and purify character. His is a portrait painted in the heaviest shades unrelieved by a single touch of light.

Yet such is not a true picture of the great Minister

of Peace. It is not for me, in the face of such evidence as is collected in the foregoing pages, to endeavour to prove that all the charges brought against Walpole are groundless, and that he quits the court of History without a stain on his character. But a man may be far from innocent, and yet not guilty of all the offences of which he is accused. That Walpole was innocent, no one, unless he permits his judgment to be clouded by an unsound admiration, can admit; still it must require far stronger evidence than has yet been produced to condemn him as the criminal which prejudice and ignorance have pronounced him.

The homely English proverb, "Give a dog a bad name, and you may as lief hang him," not inaptly illustrates the fate of Walpole. History has conferred upon him her bad name, and the result has been that everything in his disfavour has been remembered and exaggerated, whilst his good deeds have been carefully and maliciously forgotten. It was known that he had bribed—therefore he was accused of continuous and wholesale corruption. It was known that he had paid for the services of certain of his political hirelings—therefore he had tampered with the virtue of the whole body of his supporters. It was known that he had been accused, no matter how unjustly, of deriving profit from Government transactions—therefore much of his acquired wealth had been obtained by presents from interested merchants, and by the pillaging from State contracts. It was known that he made no pretensions to scholarship—therefore he was deficient in education, a man of very moderate ability, who made up for the deficiencies of intellect by cunning, intrigue, and the most lavish system of venality. It was known that he was in favour of peace—therefore he was a coward,

a traitor to English interests, a servile courtier of foreign powers.

It was also known, but wilfully suppressed, that this same minister, who was all baseness and incapacity, had kept the country, without any loss to her prestige, free from war longer than she had ever been kept since the days of James the First; that at the time when the nation was on the verge of ruin, at the collapse of the South Sea Scheme, he had been implored to come forward, and in the most skilful manner had weathered the financial storm; that he had been the first to relieve commerce from its heavy and mischievous taxation; and that, under his long rule, the trade of the country had been prosperous, the revenue increasing, and the landed interest eased of its burdens. When a wise and great man is judged alone by his evil actions, we may, without being accused of partiality or an indiscreet admiration, demur at the sentence and struggle to reverse the verdict.

Nor is the character of Walpole, if we abandon our prejudices and preconceived notions, a difficult one to read. He was a hard, keen, selfish man of the world, endowed with great talents, of untiring industry, with little belief in human nature, yet cheerful, genial, and averse to everything that savoured of cruelty. A sceptic as regards religion, he placed no faith in those lofty principles which often impregnate the whole current of a life with the purity and nobleness of their teaching. To him, duty, devotion, truth, singleness of purpose, chastity, honour, were virtues inculcated from the pulpit and described by literature, but which had no existence in real life—mere empty phrases freely employed by the ambitious and the cunning to mask their motives.

Placed on the pinnacle of Power, he looked down on the world beneath him, and the sight that met his view had not tended to alter his opinion of his fellow-creatures. He saw Churchmen—Churchmen who ever preached their kingdom was not of this world—fawning upon him, intriguing with the most abandoned of women, lavish in their eulogies upon the corrupt and the profligate in high places, ready to stoop to any meanness, weak, cowardly, servile, provided they only obtained the prizes of their sacred calling. He saw Lawyers, full of their petty spites and jealousies, so severe in their professional view of morality, so lax in their private life, hot with the hate of competition, bowing down before him, urging their claims and disparaging one another in the race for advancement. He saw great Nobles grovelling at his feet to possess a vacant Garter, gallant Soldiers throwing aside their manhood and self-respect to obtain stars and ribbons, Politicians discarding their cherished principles for a post at Court or the governorship of a colony, Adventurers willing to descend to any degradation to procure the means of livelihood.

In his eyes the world revolved upon the axis of self-interest, and between the poles of venality and corruption. There was nothing great, or noble, or pure in life: all was scheming, intrigue, and selfishness. One man entered the Church to become a Bishop; another embraced the Law to hold the Great Seal; a third was a politician because he wished office; it was always the rewards and never the duties incidental to the profession that tempted men. To think that human nature ever performed anything for nothing, or was actuated in the objects it undertook by lofty and unnecessary motives, was, as he

said, a schoolboy's dream, the flight of a raw ignorant lad.

Yet low and one-sided as was this view of mankind, we must remember, as an excuse for his unworthy cynicism, that Walpole had, during the whole tenure of his power, been in the habit of regarding human nature from its most unfavourable aspect. Either directly or indirectly all the great posts in the Crown were in his gift. He was seldom approached but to grant a request; and men are never at their best when suppliants for favours. For the greater part of his life Walpole had been behind the scenes; he had seen the actresses paint and powder and storm at each other; he had seen the actors learn their parts, pad their limbs, and set their features; he had seen the mechanism of the performances, and how the art had been acquired which was to hide the art; and therefore we cannot expect from him the same opinion of the play and the players as from the audience which watches the stage from the front of the house. It is only those in power who can really know the heights to which man can rise, and the depths to which he can fall.

"No one," writes Lord Brougham, mindful of the petitioners who crowded round him when on the Woolsack,* "no one who has been long the dispenser of patronage among large bodies of his fellow-citizens can fail to see infinitely more numerous instances of sordid, selfish, greedy, ungrateful conduct, than of the virtues to which such hateful qualities stand opposed. Daily examples come before him of the most unfeeling acrimony towards competitors—the most far-fetched squeamish jealousy of all conflicting claims—unblushing falsehood in both its

* "Statesmen of the Time of George III." Appendix. Sir R. Walpole.

branches, boasting and detraction—grasping selfishness in both kinds, greedy pursuit of men's own bread, and cold calculating upon others' blood—the fury of disappointment when that has not been done which it was impossible to do—swift oblivion of all that has been granted—unreasonable expectations of more, only because much has been given—not seldom favours repaid with hatred and ill-treatment, as if by this unnatural course the account might be settled between gratitude and pride —*such are the secrets of the human heart which power soon discloses to its possessor:* add to these that which, however, deceives no one—the never-ceasing hypocrisy of declaring that whatever is most eagerly sought is only coveted as affording the means of serving the country, and will only be taken at the sacrifice of individual interest to the sense of public duty; and *I desire to be understood here as speaking from my own official experience.*"

Judging mankind at so base a value, it should be mentioned, to the credit of Walpole, that he never affected the spleen of the misanthrope, or the soured views of the malignant cynic. On the contrary, all agree that in his private life he was a singularly cheerful, and, unless his own interests were at stake, a very kindly man. Both in the House of Commons and in London society he was much liked. He had a ready wit, piqued himself, like a Frenchman, upon his powers of conversation, and was popular with women and with young men. It was an age when the easy morality of Versailles and Marli was much in fashion amongst the higher classes of the English people. Walpole, like many men not particularly well-favoured by nature, pretended to be irresistible. To admit his successes with the fair sex was at once to win his heart.

"His prevailing weakness," writes Lord Chesterfield, "was to be thought to have a polite and happy turn to gallantry, of which he had undoubtedly less than any man living; it was his favourite and frequent subject of conversation, which proved, to those who had any penetration, that it was his prevailing weakness, and they applied to it with success." According to Pulteney, "a writer who would tell him of his success in his amours would gain his confidence in a higher degree than one who commended the conduct of his administration." One of the crew who ought to have been immortalised in the Dunciad sings in miserable verse:

> "Nay, to divert the sneering town,
> Is next a general lover grown,
> Affects to talk of his amours,
> And boasts of having ruin'd scores,
> While all who hear him bite the lip,
> And scarce with pain their laughter keep."

Walpole, however, is not the only statesman who has preferred to be considered in the light of a man of gallantry to that of a great minister.

But of all the strictures passed upon Walpole none is more malicious or more easily disproved than that of intellectual incapacity. Bolingbroke sneered at his talents; Swift thought meanly of them; Wyndham and Chesterfield laughed at his want of education. That Walpole was no scholar is evident, not only from the criticism of his enemies, but from his own statements. He had no literary gifts; he disliked books and such information as is only to be obtained from books. "I wish," he said to Fox, who was poring over a volume in the library at Houghton, "I wish I took as much delight in reading as you do; it would be the means of alleviating many tedious hours in

my present retirement; but, to my misfortune, I derive no pleasure from such pursuits." He considered the pursuit of literature as an exercise of the mind which unfitted men for the business of life. The author of "Cato," and of the most charming essays in the *Spectator*, was a wretched speaker, and perhaps one of the worst Secretaries of State that ever held the seals. Steele was utterly wanting in application. Prior had displayed none of the talents conspicuous in his poetry in his transactions as a diplomatist. "You will find he has no head for business," remarked Walpole when he appointed Congreve a Commissioner of Customs.

Impressed with these views, no minister, except the second Pitt, was a meaner patron of letters. He held that it was not the duty of the State to encourage men to neglect the practical affairs of life to write sonnets on the moon or essays on government. If a man chose to be an author he must live by the sale of his publications. If his works did not sell he should abandon authorship. Literature was a trade like any other, and should be dependent upon itself and not expect to be pensioned by the country. With the exception of befriending the author of the "Night Thoughts," Walpole declined, throughout his long rule, to relieve by State help the wants of a single struggling man of letters. "No man," writes the historian Tindal, "ever set the press to work with so little judgment as he did. He looked upon writing to be a mechanical kind of business, and he took up with the first pen that he could find in public offices, or whom he could oblige by private liberality." "He hired his authors," says Earl Stanhope,* "as he would his ditchers, holding no personal communi-

* "History of England," vol. ii. p. 341.

cation with them, but placing them in general under the guidance of Paxton, Solicitor to the Treasury, or of other Ministerial subalterns; persons who in general may be observed to have more ignorance of, and contempt for, literature than any other class of gentlemen. How could Walpole have expected much popular effect from such mercenary drudges as his party writers? Were these the men to stem the eloquence of Bolingbroke, or retort the irony of Swift? Some pamphlets of considerable power were indeed contributed in defence of the administration by Lord Hervey and Sir W. Yonge; but with a few exceptions it may be said that all the talent and ingenuity were with the Opposition writers, and that the public mind was gradually and imperceptibly won over to their sentiments. The change was slow, but complete and universal; and thus Sir Robert Walpole's neglect of the public press may be classed amongst the foremost causes of his unpopularity and fall." The fact was that Walpole, observing the indifference of the King to the charms of literature, and that the press, however it might influence the country outside, was powerless to add to or detract from his majority in the Legislature, sneered at its utility, and declined its aid.

But because a minister may show himself no patron of letters or friend of science, it does not necessarily follow that he is deficient in education or in ability. He is wanting in sympathy and in taste, nothing more. If the charges of the enemies of Walpole are true, that he was ignorant, and a political mediocrity, how can we reconcile with such accusations—his wonderful rise to power, his long tenure of office, the supreme authority he wielded? His birth was honourable, but the name he inherited would

not in itself entitle him, in an age when the influence of the aristocracy was enormous, to put himself at the head of the proud nobles of England, and for twenty years to rule the country—to rule the country absolutely, imperially, and without permitting a single rival to share his power. The criterion of success is a vulgar one, but it seems to me that on this occasion it may justly be advanced to disprove the malignant charges of a malevolent faction. That Walpole became Prime Minister, that he was himself the Cabinet, and that for a longer period than generally falls to the lot of administrations he governed the nation wisely, temperately, and judiciously, is the clearest proof of his great talents and splendid powers of organization. He may not have had the knowledge of the schoolboy, or the manufactured erudition of the bookworm, and it may well be that he was ignorant as to the existence of Empson and Dudley, for history he never read, its statements being in his eyes a tissue of falsehoods;* but that he was as devoid of culture as his enemies assert is disproved by his speeches, his profound acquaintance with the system of finance, and his taste for art. Not a single financial scheme introduced by him, however much resisted at the time, but has met with the approval of posterity. Dean Tucker calls him "the best commercial minister this country ever produced," and it was truly said of him that "he found the book of rates the worst, and left it the best, in Europe." We know the opposition his Excise Bill encountered, and the strictures passed upon it. Once in the House of Commons, when Walpole had long since entered into his rest, Pitt, afterwards the lofty Chatham, remarked in the course

* "Oh! do not read history," he said to his son Horace, "for that I know must be false!"

of his speech that "Sir Robert Walpole was a very able minister." Several members laughed, for they well remembered the passages of arms that had taken place between the departed statesman and the late fiery cornet of horse. Pitt continued sternly, "The more I reflect on my conduct, the more I blame myself for opposing the Excise Bill," and, added he, in the tones that always hushed the levity of his audience, "let those who are ashamed to confess their errors laugh out. Can it be deemed adulation to praise a minister who is no more?" To be praised by a great rival is eulogy indeed.

"It is unnecessary to urge any other proof of his abilities for Finance," writes Archdeacon Coxe, "than that confidence which, throughout his whole administration, moneyed men and the nation placed in the Government; and that nothing created greater alarm among them than the apprehensions that he would either rapidly pay off the National Debt or reduce the interest. This fact is an answer to those speculative reasoners who, not adverting to the temper of the times, and judging of past transactions by present circumstances, indiscriminately censure the minister for not discharging the whole public burthens, for alienating the Sinking Fund, and for opposing Sir John Barnard's plan to reduce the interest of the National Debt."

His speeches were much admired, and his eloquence certainly displayed no signs of that want of finish or poverty of illustration visible in the oratory of the uneducated. Speaker Onslow regarded the speech on the Peerage Bill as that of an accomplished scholar, and posterity will certainly endorse his judgment. Both the Duke of Argyle and Lord Cornbury were of opinion that the speech

in which Walpole abandoned his Excise Bill was a splendid exercise of eloquence. Pitt said that the philippic against Wyndham on the secession was one of the finest he ever heard. It is well known that when Steele was threatened with expulsion, the speech he delivered in his defence was suggested by Walpole, and that on the following day Walpole made a second speech on the same subject, even better than the first. But perhaps the strongest illustration of his varied ability is to be found in his conduct on one occasion when sitting in the Court of Exchequer. As Chancellor of the Exchequer it became his duty to decide in a cause of great difficulty and importance. The learned Barons were divided in opinion, and Walpole, as Chancellor, was called upon to make the decision. We are told that, after a long trial, in which six of the most skilful lawyers pleaded on each side for nineteen hours, Walpole summed up, and in a speech of an hour and a half delivered judgment with such sound impartiality, and such a mastery of the facts of the case, "as if he had been bred to the law, and had practised no other business all his life." * When such a man—distinguished as statesman, orator, financier, and judge—is sneered at as lacking education and genuine ability, we feel that we have to deal, not with the truth of evidence, but with the calumny of malice, and may dismiss the charge with the contempt it deserves.

But if we admit his talents, and extenuate his cynicism, can we defend him from the accusation of corruption? That Walpole was guilty of bribery, that he drew upon the funds of the Treasury to obtain political support, and that he was unscrupulous in his organization of a majority,

* Lord Hervey to Horace Walpole, November 18, 1735. Coxe.

are statements which it is impossible to deny. "It was the age of open and systematic bribery. Men of probity and honour thought then no more of selling their votes than they now do of contracting with a poulterer to take their game, or with a greengrocer to take their fruit. The Jacobites were chiefly in the pay of France; many of the Hanoverians were in the pay of the Treasury; a goodly number of the Tories sided with him who paid them best. What can we think of the tone of political morality of those days, when we read of the great-grandson of the celebrated Hampden, though himself a man of fortune, and an honourable representative of the English squirarchy, calmly stating, that unless he can obtain a pension from the King he will go over to the Pretender? Such was the spirit of the times, and Walpole, who was not above his age in honour, did not scruple to avail himself of it.

But though he, in common with all his predecessors in office, certainly pandered to the bad fashion of his day, by bribing members of Parliament with money, was he the "patron of corruption" to the extent malevolence asserts? To believe his enemies, Walpole made large profits out of every Government contract he recommended; he used the most undue influence at elections; he freely drew upon the funds of the Secret Service for the purposes of parliamentary corruption. Yet what is the true story? On his resignation in 1742, when he was as forsaken as Clarendon on his downfall, a committee, as we have seen, was appointed to inquire into his public conduct. This committee consisted—with the exception of two members—of Walpole's bitterest enemies, and yet, after a keen and prejudiced investigation, what was discovered? That he

had sought to corrupt a Mayor of Weymouth; that he had dismissed a few subordinate officials for voting against the Government; that he had promised an appointment to a returning officer; and that the sums voted for Secret Service had been large, and no strict accounts of their expenditure had been furnished. What a result to support so sweeping a charge!

"You attribute Walpole's success mainly to corruption," writes Sir Robert Peel—who had carefully studied the life and character of that minister*—to the late Earl Stanhope, then, as Lord Mahon, engaged upon his "History of England." "You consider the revival of expiring and almost extinguished corruption to have been the strength, and that it should be the shame, of Walpole. You assume that public men were disposed to be virtuous, and that Walpole set the example, at least was the author and parent, of renewed venality. Now what is the evidence—where are the proofs of this?

"If Walpole did really corrupt the age; if the foundation of his strength was the systematic misapplication of the public money to the purposes of bribery, or the prostitution of public honours and rewards to the same end; why, when these charges were daily preferred against him, for the purpose of inflaming the public mind, why is it that a Select Committee of twenty-one members—nineteen of them his bitter enemies—appointed after his fall, commissioned to lay a siege to his past life, equal in duration to the siege of Troy, produced no details of bribery, no specific facts to support the confident allegations of Walpole's powerful and inveterate enemies? It does seem marvellous that if bribery was so systematic, and

* "The Stanhope Miscellanies," Sir Robert Walpole, December 23, 1833.

corruption so shameless and notorious; if elections were unduly influenced to so novel and extraordinary a degree; if fraudulent contracts were granted so lavishly—that the specific instances of these misdeeds, on the part of a fallen and most unpopular minister, should be so very meagre, and supported by such imperfect proofs.

"When one recollects what other ministers, the predecessors of Walpole, had so recently done; the shameful bribes which had been taken by Cabinet Ministers—by Sunderland, and Aislabie, and Craggs—for the furtherance of the South Sea Scheme; and when one reads the report of that committee, the bitter enemies of Walpole, their horror at his attempts on the virtue of the Mayor of Weymouth, their indignation that in order to secure a favourable returning officer he had promised the mayor a place in the Revenue; that he had committed the shocking atrocity of dismissing some Excise officers who voted against the Government candidate—one cannot help smiling at the virtuous rage of these incensed patriots, who seem, like the giants in Rabelais, after having swallowed windmills for their daily fare, to have been choked by a pound of butter." In this summing-up of Sir Robert Peel the most prejudiced mind must admit that not a weak point can be discovered.

But Walpole was the author of the saying that "every man has his price," thereby implying that to be venal was the normal condition of human nature, and corruption only a question of degree. Had he in reality made this remark, it might, to a certain extent, support the statements of those who accuse him of boundless bribery, by proving that his opinion of mankind was based on personal experience, and that he had found none to resist his tempting offers. But,

as a matter of fact, he said no such thing; what he did say was, "All these men"—alluding to the vain, the mercenary, and the culpably ambitious—"have their price;" a very different remark, and one as applicable now as then.

As long as Parliamentary Government exists there will be found men who embrace politics for purely selfish ends. In every Parliament there will be the clever, bitter, unprincipled member, who hopes, by his savage attacks upon the Government, to be silenced—not as in the days of Walpole, by money—but by its nineteenth-century equivalent—office. There will be the wealthy trader desirous of occupying a more brilliant position in society than commerce has allotted him, and who hopes, through the portals of Ministerial receptions, to attain his ends; such a man can be bought, not by money, but by social influences, and would vote for any Government that stamped the blood-red hand upon his newly found escutcheon. There will be the broad-acred landowner, who has spent a small fortune in successfully contesting the division of his county, and whose sole object in entering the House of Commons is that it may prove a highway to the peerage. There will be the political adventurer ready to place his vote, as a soldier of fortune places his sword, at the disposal of the party which will reward him best. These are the followers—no contemptible gathering—that a minister knows how to manipulate, if it be worth his while to obtain their allegiance. It was to this hireling tribe that Walpole alluded when he said, "All these men have their price," and none had reason to know better than he who paid for their services.

Under the rule of Walpole corruption was far easier in its practice, and far more lucrative in its results,

than at the present day, owing to the secrecy in which parliamentary proceedings were wrapped, and the extensive patronage in the hands of the head of the Cabinet. It was not only the guineas of the Treasury that kept together his powerful majority. A ribbon, an embassy, a coronet, the command of a regiment, the governorship of a colony, a commissionership—were all bribes equally efficacious to retain parliamentary allegiance. "All these men have their price," said Walpole as he scanned, with his cynical eyes, the mercenary on his side of the House, and the patriots hungry and empty amongst the Opposition. "A patriot!" he cried, with contempt, "why, 'tis but to refuse an unreasonable or an impertinent demand, and up starts a patriot! I could raise fifty of them within the four-and-twenty hours." But that all men were to be bought, and that none were imbued with a pure and disinterested affection for their country, he did not believe. He considered that they were in the minority, but he did not deny their existence. "I will not say who are to be corrupted," he remarked, "but I will say who is not to be corrupted: it is Shippen."

Still, if Walpole did not corrupt others with the freedom his enemies allege, was not he himself guilty of the grossest peculation? He was a country gentleman of good fortune, he had held office for many years, and he had made considerable profit during the fluctuations in the South Sea Stock; but would these justify the vast sums he spent upon the improvement of his seat at Houghton, upon his princely hospitalities, and upon the splendid collection of pictures to be found in his galleries? The question has been asked before, and we cannot offer a more satisfactory answer than has already been given.

"I must own," writes Lord Mahon to Sir Robert Peel in a second letter touching the character of the adviser of George II.,* "I must own that when I look at Walpole's moderate inheritance,† I still feel some difficulty in satisfactorily accounting for his lavish expenditure. Even at that period it was not very easy to become much richer in high office. Lord Chesterfield, I think, says of one of Walpole's successors, the Duke of Newcastle, that he was poorer by £300,000 when he left than when he entered the Treasury; which, by-the-bye, he goes on to call, with a sneer at Walpole, 'a most un-ministerial proceeding!' I had imagined that (waiving for a moment the different value of money) the salary and emoluments of a Prime Minister were not much more considerable in those days than in ours. Thus, then, it seemed very strange how Walpole, who from his profuse style of living, and especially his 'meetings,' at Houghton, was thought fully to live up to his income, could yet spare from it at least £240,000 for buildings, lands, and pictures; that is, during his twenty years of Premiership, at the rate of £12,000 annually."

To these objections Sir Robert Peel thus replied: ‡

"One word more as to the charges of personal corruption which were preferred by Walpole's enemies. In the last century such charges against ministers who built splendid houses or lived expensively were not unfrequent. If I recollect aright, Lord Bute was subject to the same accusation on account of Luton: it was said he was bribed by France.

* "The Stanhope Miscellanies," December 27, 1833.

† According to Coxe, Walpole's inheritance was moderate, but, as I have already said, Coxe had much underrated the rental of Houghton.

‡ "Stanhope Miscellanies," December 30, 1833.

"Two hundred thousand pounds is certainly a large sum for Walpole to have expended at Houghton; but observe, this sum includes purchase of land: and before there could be any well-grounded suspicion of personal dishonesty, many inquiries should be made. The first, and most material, would be, What were the usual and legitimate emoluments of the offices which Walpole held, or which his immediate family held? In modern times the exact income of a Secretary at War, a Paymaster of the Forces, and a Chancellor of the Exchequer is strictly regulated and known to all the world; but in the time of Walpole the payment was mainly by fees, occasionally very large in their amount. I believe the gains of two of the offices above mentioned—the War Office and Pay Office—to have been very considerable.

"Another inquiry would be, Whether the money for purchases of land was raised on the whole, or paid by mortgage on the land bought?

"The amount of the fortune of Walpole's first wife, and his legitimate gain by the open sale of South Sea Stock, when out of office, must be taken into account.

"A fourth subject of inquiry would be the fortune left by Walpole. I doubt whether he did not die an embarrassed man; * whether he had not spent by far the greater part of

* "It is certain he is dead very poor: his debts with his legacies, which are trifling, amount to £50,000. His estate, a nominal £8,000 a year, much mortgaged. In short, his fondness for Houghton has endangered Houghton. If he had not so overdone it, he might have left such an estate to his family as might have secured the glory of the place for many years: another such debt must expose it to sale. If he had lived, his unbounded generosity and contempt of money would have run him into vast difficulties. However irreparable his personal loss may be to his friends, he certainly died critically well for himself: he had lived to stand the rudest trials with honour, to see his character universally cleared, his enemies brought to infamy for their ignorance or villainy, and the world allowing him to be the only man in England fit to be what he had been."—Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, April 15, 1745.

his emoluments. It is twice mentioned by Coxe, that he lamented that he had built on so large a scale at Houghton, and Coxe has these expressions, 'the embarrassed situation of his own affairs increased his dejection.'

"My general impression is that he was profuse in his expenditure, and careless about money. I cannot say I think £3,000 a year (the cost of the Houghton meetings), for the Prime Minister of England to spend in convivial entertainments, at a magnificent country-house, where he received not only his personal but his political friends, at all unreasonable. Other ministers have laid by their emoluments, and escaped notice. Walpole spent his income, and the evidence of profusion was daily seen, and created, I believe, unfounded suspicion.

"Nothing would surprise me more than to find Walpole convicted of personal dishonesty, when I look at his demeanour in the face of his enemies, his general habits, the scrutiny to which his conduct was exposed after his fall, and the warning he had in early life by a committal to the Tower on a charge of this nature.... Of what public man can it be said, with any assurance of certainty, that, placed in the situation of Walpole, he would in the course of an administration of twenty years have committed so few errors, and would have left at the close of it the House of Hanover in equal security, and the finances in equal order? that he would have secured to England more of the blessings of peace, or would have defeated the machinations of internal enemies with less of vindictive severity, or fewer encroachments on the liberty of the subject?"

Still, though we can prove the existence of his great talents, extenuate his cynicism, reduce the charges against him of corruption, and absolve him from peculation, we

cannot contend that Walpole, as a man, is deserving of much of the respect and admiration of posterity. He loved power with a selfishness and a jealousy that political history has never seen equalled. His sense of delicacy was blunt in the extreme. He was notoriously immoral, and his conversation gross even for a gross age. He indulged freely in the pleasures of the table, and was not a little of a sot. He was utterly indifferent to public opinion, where the gratification of his own vices were concerned. Yet there was in him, as there is in every man, something of good. His was an eminently kindly nature. There was nothing cruel or vindictive in his disposition. He knew that several of his enemies were intriguing with the Pretender, and that at a word from him their heads would rest on the executioner's block; but he listened to their abuse with a smile, and declined to send them to the Tower. He was devoted to his children. Slow to forgive when once offended, yet a warm and tenacious friend to those he liked, and from whom he had nothing to fear. He was free from avarice; generous in his habits, and much given to hospitality. His address was frank and open; he deceived, but he did not lie. His temper was perfect. "Sir Robert was of a temper so calm and equal," said Pulteney to Johnson, "and so hard to be provoked, that he was very sure he never felt the bitterest invective against him for half an hour." Of him thus writes Pope:

> "Seen him I have, but in his happier hour
> Of social pleasure, ill-exchang'd for power;
> Seen him, uncumber'd with the venal tribe,
> Smile without art, and win without a bribe."

"He was the best man," says Speaker Onslow, "from

the goodness of his heart, to live with and live under, of any great man I ever knew."

But if in the man we find much to condemn, in the statesman there is much to applaud.

"Without being a genius of the first class," writes Burke in his "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," "he was an intelligent, prudent, and safe minister. He loved peace; and he helped to communicate the same disposition to nations at least as warlike and restless as that in which he had the chief direction of affairs. Though he served a master who was fond of martial fame, he kept all the establishments very low. The land tax continued at two shillings in the pound for the greater part of his administration. The other impositions were moderate. The profound repose, the equal liberty, the firm protection of just laws, during the long period of his power, were the principal causes of that prosperity which took such rapid strides towards perfection; and which furnished to the nation ability to acquire the military glory which it has since obtained, as well as to bear the burthens, the cause and consequence of that warlike reputation. With many virtues, public and private, he had his faults; but his faults were superficial. A careless, coarse, and over-familiar style of discourse, without sufficient regard to persons or occasions, and an almost total want of political decorum were the errors by which he was most hurt in the public opinion, and those through which his enemies obtained the greatest advantage over him. But justice must be done. The prudence, steadiness, and vigilance of that man, joined to the greatest possible levity in his character and his politics, preserved the Crown to the Royal Family; and with it their laws and liberties to this country."

On the proud roll of English ministers there stand the names of men far more worthy of reverence than he who guided the councils of the Second George, yet few who more skilfully and judiciously led on a nation to progress and prosperity, making her name great without invoking the power of the sword.

THE END.

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